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1918

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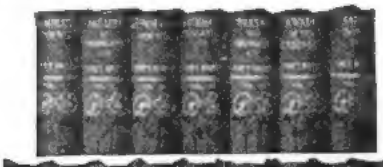

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FC

How Joe Tynan Became the World's Greatest Shipbuilder

WHEN, on August 4, 1918, the giant 12,000-ton "Invincible" slipped off the ways at Alameda, Cal., just 23 days and 23 hours from the laying of her keel, all shipbuilding records were broken, and Charles M. Schwab, Director General of Shipbuilding, hailed Joseph J. Tynan, the man who had made the feat possible, as "the greatest shipbuilder in the world."

Tynan was born in Ireland and had there a common school education. As a young man he struck out for America. Seventeen years ago, according to the *Public Ledger*, of Philadelphia, he turned up in that city and got a job as laborer at the Baldwin Locomotive Works at $8.50 a week. He was happy at his work and he at once developed an intense desire to know the "why" of things. He wanted most of all to understand the construction of tools and machinery. So he got books on these subjects and night after night he studied to gain a better understanding of the work he did during the day.

Tynan's next job was at Cramp's Shipyards at $12 a week, and now nights he studied harder than ever. He took a correspondence course in Mechanical Engineering. The more he learned from his books, the more he saw of ways to apply his knowledge. He wasn't satisfied with the way they welded armor plate at Cramp's, so he began work on a few little inventions. He kept at this until he had received 75 patents on pneumatic drills.

In five years from the time he was put on the pay roll at Cramp's, Tynan was a Superintendent. Charles M. Schwab is always on the lookout for men who have risen from the ranks. He wanted a General Manager for the Union Plant of the Bethlehem Works in California and he offered Tynan the job at $45,000 a year. Tynan took it. In six years the value of the Union Plant increased from $2,000,000.00 to $14,000,000.00.

In June, 1914, the British Government wanted 50 submarines built in Canada. The Montreal Shipbuilding Company sent for Joe Tynan. He got a year's leave of absence from the Union Plant, went to Montreal, built the 50 submarines and sent them to England under their own power, the first submersibles to cross the Atlantic!

I know of no institution that I can more strongly recommend than the International Correspondence Schools. Having taken a course in your Schools myself, I readily realize their importance to young men wishing to better their condition.

JOS. J. TYNAN,
Gen'l Manager, Union Plant,
Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation

This job done, Tynan went back to California and since America entered the war, has been concentrating his genius on the production of steel ships at the Union Plant of the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation at Alameda. When Charles M. Schwab was made Director General of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, he asked Tynan how long it would take him to turn out a 12,000-ton ship from keel-laying to launching. "Thirty days!" said Tynan, and with his loyal workers, he went at it. In just 23 days and 23 hours the great "Invincible" took to the water!

Joe Tynan became the "world's greatest shipbuilder" because, whatever he undertook, he learned to do that thing well. And he found there was a way he could learn whatever he wanted to know, in spare time without sacrificing a day or a dollar from his work. Back in those days at Baldwin's and Cramp's Joe Tynan was studying nights with the International Correspondence Schools. The I. C. S. gave him the help he needed when he needed it most. Today when he hires men for his great plant, one of his most frequent bits of advice to them is to take up immediately an I. C. S. course in their chosen work.

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RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 23, 1918.

Vol. XXXVIII. No. 3.

THE WRAITH ON THE WIRE.

BY BARCLAY NORTHCOTE.

Chappie Hare Plays a Long Shot on Ghost Morse and a Ghost Horse.

CHAPTER I.

CHIN-CHIN WITH CHAPPIE HARE.

FLUNG like a bit of human flotsam from the eddying humanity of noon hour at the corner of Avenue A and a cross street, Chappie Hare paused with his cheap, blue serge hanging in dejected wrinkles to a figure obviously not overfed and surveyed the motley throng with brooding eyes.

"Some people," he ruminated, "can go along and never get up against it like I do. They're never either up nor down. I'm all ways at once, and now I don't know just where I am."

His mood matched his garb. Chappie Hare was in a very odd situation, not to say a remorseless one, in many ways. He tried to think of some way out, but the more he thought the more the bitter fact galled him that his quest might be one doomed to failure more dire than his present mood.

He had thought it all over. There was perhaps one chance in a hundred thousand that he could succeed; for never, in all the history of New York from the landing of the Dutch to the present hectic moment in his own affairs had any individual been confronted with such a peculiar and insistent demand.

Chappie Hare was more sure of that than he was of the place where he was standing, with straight, black brows arching into a half-frown above blacker eyes, his thin nostrils dilating and his chin quivering in sympathy, hard by a cheap candy-stand from which emanated a half-nauseating sickish-sweet odor.

Out of the tail of his eye Chappie surveyed the chocolates and the serried ranks of chewing gum with the desolate air of one who knows that he is foredoomed to rise—if at all—like a rocket and as certain to come down like a stick.

"Not a chance!" he morosely muttered, as a ragged female urchin with frowsy hair propelled herself past him on legs like the handle of a toy broom and insistently demanded a striped stick of saccharine resembling a miniature barber-pole from the proprietor of the candy-stand.

"Not a chance," reiterated Chappie Hare, as a decrepit cat crept from the curb at his feet and negotiated half of the cobbles between him and the opposite side, pausing uncertainly to look back at the place it had just left before padding on again, disconsolately, as if realizing there was little if any choice in direction.

The noon-tide current surged in all four directions. Sweat-shops in loft-buildings on Avenue A regurgitated bearded workers, chattering in polysyllabic jargon as they elbowed their way up and down the pavements; stodgy girls, some with impudent eyes, often three abreast and with faces suggesting Krakow or Odessa, filtered into the parade; some saffron-faced young men with scissors or knives rambled to where an itinerant grinder was furiously pedaling his emery wheel; others edged their way to push-carts displaying wares whose gamut ran from cheap collar buttons to semidecayed bananas; a slovenly woman emerged from the "family entrance" of the saloon at Hare's elbow with a can of "slops" and waddled like a fat duck back to a teeming tenement, just before a rotund gentleman with a Semitic cast of countenance shot into Chappie's eyes the sheen of a big yellow diamond in his scarf, a search-light among the less opulent to herald his passage among them.

All of them might have been wraiths from another world to judge by the manner in which Chappie Hare ignored them. None of them could help extricate him from the current of his morbid introspection, to say nothing of removing its cause.

Then, just as he arrived at the nadir of his dejection, his black eyes visualized another individual, rather nattily attired in Sheppard's plaid and black patent leathers, with a gray fedora to match.

His aloof and indolent air no less than his zippy style of dress marked him as an alien in the turgid tide of toilers. The moment Chappie Hare's optics took in the details of his pockmarked face and deep-set, lusterless eyes he was across the street in long strides, his whole manner undergoing a startling metamorphosis.

"Hello, Ed Logan!" he cried, cordially extending his hand. "How did you get down here from Buffalo? I was up to see you just before I went to Pimlico for the meet, but you were out with the mob, somewhere, hittin' the high spots. Gee, but you look good. How are you, anyway?"

The individual addressed turned a pallid, pockmarked face blankly toward Chappie Hare. Into his lack-luster eyes crept no answering gleam of either pleasure or recognition.

"Where do you get that mustard?" he venomously queried. "Do I look as much like a hick as you do a dick?"

Chappie Hare laughed, Homerically.

"Why, excuse me, Mr. Grover Cleveland," he jeered. "Mebbe you think, Ed, because I look like I'm on the nut, that you gotta part with a few jitneys.

"Guess again before you reopen that cold-storage valve on an old pal. They didn't get all my wad at Pimlico, although I didn't get all of theirs, either."

"Old patter!" rejoined the other, cynically. "You'll be singin' 'Bedelia, I'd like to steal you,' next—what?"

Chappie Hare frowned. Then he turned to the decrepit cat, who was arching her moth-eaten back against his leg like a mendicant asking alms.

"He don't know me," asseverated Hare to the friendly feline. "And me his pal for nine years. Me! Chappie Hare, who usta be sportin' editor of the *Blade* when he was on the night-desk.

"Me!" he reiterated, "who palled with him over to Fort Erie track as many times as there's bubbles in the Niagara River, and more times than he's got pockmarks we went down to the Great Lakes poolroom together at Tonawanda Street and Military Road and knocked 'em down when they was runnin' anywhere from Tanforan to Bowie!

"And now he don't know me!"

Into the lack-luster orbs crept a slight gleam of dubiety.

"My name ain't Ed," said he, "my name's Mike. And, you got me wrong!"

"If I have," said Chappie Hare, "it's the first time in my young life I ever rapped to a friend when he wasn't a friend but a dead-ringer for him."

He drew out a sheaf of letters bearing his name and a small card-case from which he deftly extracted a Pullman parlor-car ticket. This he turned over and thrust toward the other.

"If you ain't Ed Logan, I'm off'n you for life, after this phony tumble; but, don't that date prove I just come down from Buffalo, lined with green goods and hittin' the plush lazy-backs all the way?"

Mike admitted the soft impeachment. Chappie Hare went on, a trifle heatedly.

"I'll lay you ten to one that I wasn't tryin' to give you the big mitt," said he, "and all you got to do to lose the bet is to write Davy Taylor, managing editor of the *Blade*, and ask him to describe Ed Logan's mush for you.

"If you ain't Ed, you're the grandest little ringer for him that ever doubled in his face without knowing it. Why, I went up there just to get him to go to Pimlico with me and just got back from Pimlico this morning!"

He replaced the sheaf of letters and wallet with an injured air.

The pockmarked man fluxed somewhat around the straight slit that passed for his mouth.

"How was things down there?" he asked casually.

"As I said at the beginning," dourly returned Chappie, "they didn't get quite all of mine nor me all of theirs. I knocked down a three-way parley yesterday—Stargazer, Colonel Tucker, and Nile Maiden.

"Averaged out on that parley, and if you had been Ed Logan, instead of his ghost or twin, I was goin' to mention a good thing I got for to-day at Havana. But, you're name ain't Ed—it's Mike; and as you still think I'm a dick and out to throw the hyp into you, I'll buy a drink and blow."

Mike offered no objections to the apologetic libation. When it was over, he signaled for a second.

"That's one trouble about growin' up in the corn belt," grumbled Chappie. "You grow so big and broad that when you're down to a blue-serge suit and a sheaf of uncle's three-ball reminders, tryin' to land on a live one, everybody gives you the glassy eye because you look like a dick. 'S'awl right—here's how!"

He tossed off his drink.

"Got to go and git down on my live one."

He started for the door. Mike interposed.

"You can get down on him here, with the bartender," he suggested smoothly.

"Sure. I can but I won't," said Chappie. "I'm going to lay at least half a century on him. I'll drift up to Wallick's. Some of the mob I know will be around there—Billy Kennelly, Jack Breen, Tony MacIntyre, and then there's Ormond Lusk.

"I wrote sheet for Ormund the season of 1909 and 1910 at Juarez. Toughest break Ormund ever got, and on a syndicate-book, at that. Hundred dollar cut-in. No play.

"Just expensed away a big bank roll and when he tried playin' 'em from the ground, no luck!"

"I know Ormund, too," rejoined the other. "My name's Mike Maloney. But, why won't you lay a bet with the bartender, here?"

"Nine reasons," laughed Chappie, edging still nearer the door. "One is I want track odds. No newspaper settlements for mine. The price always falls when they begin to lay him.

"Besides, Mr. Maloney, I was wised up to that bartender-bet stuff when Hector was a pup. The bartender takes your jack—then he goes off duty and you don't find out before the race is run whether he's got it down, or not.

"If your good thing ain't in the money, next morning the bartender tells you he got it down. If he wins, the bartender's awful sorry—but the hand-book man didn't show till the dogs was at the post."

Chappie Hare gave a Hebraic gesture with his arms.

"The other seven reasons will keep until the bartender comes on again to-morrow," he averred, as a diminutive lad dodged in under the folding doors with the newspapers.

Before going out Chappie Hare paused to buy a pink "sporting extra," leaving Mr.

Mike Maloney a prey to quite conflicting emotions, against the end of the bar.

CHAPTER II.

A "GOOD THING" AND OTHER THINGS.

IN the long pause inside the door, Mr. Maloney left the bar and glided over to where the larger man was avidly scanning the entries from Havana, the weather conditions and the usual "past-performance" chart on the horses scheduled for that track.

"What's your good thing?" he sibilated.

Chappy Hare regarded him with scant civility.

"My good thing is mine," said he, curtly. "You rap to me for a goose and you ain't original at that. Only this mornin', coming acrost Fifty-Third Street on an Amsterdam rattler, the nickle-grabber come runnin' to me yellin: 'Officer, officer! Come here a minit.'

"I got off and walked up where the inspector was tryin' to pry a skinny old broad from a seat with a bum transfer. She lamped me and I said: 'Madam, why don't you pay your fare? You're delayin' the car. If you ain't got it, I'll pay it for you—or pull th' box for the wagon.'

"She paid. But," Chappie's face hardened, "I know I look like a dick. You don't look like one, and yet you might be a goose, your own self."

"What if I was, which I ain't?" said Maloney. "It ain't no crime to hand a friend a tip on a good thing. You don't know he won't throw it in the river, do you?"

"I don't know as much as when I was raised not three blocks from here," said Chappie, "except that this town is full of false alarms. Why should I jerk any bell ropes?"

Maloney's face expanded into a grin.

"It takes me back to th' old days at Sheepshead Bay, to hear your chatter about the mob," said he, genially. "Mind the time that Big Dick Croker and Senator Murphy and the Wigwam bunch usta go down to Sheepshead and bet ten grand on a good thing?"

"Markers!" echoed Hare, "and mostly with Sol Lichtenstein. I've seen 'em bet him off'n his stool. But he was game, Sol was.

"That was when we had only one motto—live and let live, but roll the soggy ones for the chunk. Mighty few of that old mob left, let me tell you."

"No nourishment, nowdays," acquiesced Maloney. "But, I'd like to be in on this live one of yours. How live is he?"

"They prepped him for Pimlico," said Hare, "and even worked him out on the Q. T. over at Belmont before they took him down in a padded furniture van to make him an added starter the middle of week before get-away week.

"Weather too wet. He was ready. But he's a fat flatiron in the mud. He's in today at Havana. 'Weather clear, track fast.'" he pointed to the pink sheet.

"How about that tip?" gently insinuated Mr. Maloney, whose face was far more like a relief map of Judea than his name was common to County Clare.

"I made a mistake in tryin' to mitt you over on the corner," Chappie pointedly reminded him, "and you told me your name wasn't Ed. Ed could have my shirt."

"That was before I heard you say you knew Ormund Lusk."

"Ormund ain't here to mitt either of us," said Chappie. "And, if he was—if you ain't a goose, you know how these things go, don't you?"

"You mean I oughta split if the tip and bet goes through O. K.?"

"You ain't no goose—you're a clairvoyant," sneered Chappie. "How did you ever guess my little secret?"

"It ain't so new," sneered Maloney, in turn. "Touts is thick along Avenue A. Jawn D could bet his wig any afternoon."

"But them touts don't bet their own hair," countered Hare. "See here, Mike. I'll make you a flat proposition. You want to get in on this. You asked me. I didn't ask you.

"Now, I'll bet a century on my good thing if you'll bet fifty. Half of what you knock down is yours."

"What room?" queried Mike, after a moment of thought.

"You'll have to pick the place. I've been following the track-play and I'd be sailin' for Havana, right now, but for the cropper I come at Pimlico."

Heretofore the verbal sparring had been a stand-off. Each man knew the other was wise. But, to just what purpose his wisdom was to be devoted neither had been entirely satisfied until the various "leads" and "counters" had been exchanged.

Chappie Hare had shown that while he might be a "dick" he was no greenhorn. Maloney, on his part, had not yet revealed his "hole-card," a thought which comforted him hugely, when he reflected that if Hare was expecting to be taken on faith to some near-by poolroom in Manhattan, he had another think coming.

"I'll make up a stable with you on a fifty-dollar bet," said Maloney, "on them terms. Come on."

A half-hour later the twain were debouching from the tube in Hoboken. Here Maloney hired a taxi and soon afterward Hare and he were emerging into a summer garden in North Bergen township.

It was a sedate place with an Italian atmosphere and not the slightest sign of illicit enterprise. After a casual cigar Maloney led the way to an upper floor

Here, too, all was silence and inactivity, save for a man nodding on the edge of a bed with a very dirty quilt.

He looked at Chappie's escort, opened a closet door, and the two went down two flights of concealed stairs, emerging again into a large building adjoining the hotel above, but on a lower story. It nestled against the side of the ridge on which the summer garden entrance was erected.

On all sides the place was surrounded by a high, board fence, enclosing a picnic ground with benches and trees and an oval space on which was a baseball diamond—save in the far corner where nestled this structure which Chappie at once saw was a "dancing casino."

The term was not so appropriate, even now; for the stage which ordinarly housed the orchestra now held only one short, pudgy man, who was chalking up on a big blackboard the entry weights, jockeys, and "opening odds" of Havana.

No chattering telegraph, however, was in evidence; neither was there a phone. Instead, a speaking tube led down from the roof, and when information was forthcoming, it shrilled a chirrup that brought the odds-poster to lean his ear against the hinged orifice.

Milling around on the floor below were at least five hundred men of all ages and types, dancing, each in his individual tempo, to the Goddess of Chance.

"How d'ye like it?" inquired Maloney.

"It's made to order," enthused Chappie. "And now, seein's how you come clean to me that you ain't no goose, I'll tip you to my own mitt. Over here, in the corner. We don't want this whole mob in on this."

He backed into a corner and spread out his pink sheet. 'Weather fair, track fast,'" he gloated. "And here's my good thing—Wraith.

"See him? First out this season. Take it from me, he's pickled with hop or his name wouldn't be among those present.

"Now, let's grab the first odds. They'll slide when the stable money goes down on him—at the track and everywhere."

Maloney led him to a hole in the wall a big cat would have had difficulty in crawling through. A man outside gave him a numbered card, and a ticket which Hare filled out.

"Fifty on Wraith to win; fifty a place."

He heard the sheetwriter within intone:

"Wraith, one thousand to fifty to win; five hundred to fifty to show."

Then he received another ticket through the hole. Maloney also made the same bet but half the amount.

"It's up to you, Chappie," said he, as they moved aside for the stream of other bettors. "This is Bob Hunter's place—"

"Hold on!" grinned Hare. "As you said back in town, 'Don't start singin' Bedelia to me.' Bob Hunter ain't nearer than seventy-five miles from these marshes. He was at Pimlico last night and went from there to Atlantic City."

"Bob owns this joint just the same and he's got a million friends. Look at this mob. And he had to switch from Jersey City to this North Bergen mob only day before yesterday."

Mike waved his hand at the avid crowd.

"That's a big play," admitted Chappie, "on that kind of a switch. He must have a lotta runners out besides you. And, if he's payin' anything it's costing him a century a day for ice (protection from politicians or local police officials), alone, besides wages for his crew inside, outside, rent, wire tolls, and the rest of it. He's gotta have a big play to break even."

"Day before yesterday," replied Mike, "Bob handled sixty grand on twelve races at Havana and Lexington. Hello! they're at the post in Havana for the second. Now, let's see what your good thing does."

"So soon?" grunted Chappie Hare when the fat man had ceased barking through a megaphone.

"Bob cuts the bettin' time down fine," explained his guide. "Has to. The wise boys tried to nick him by a spark-system from Cuba."

"I don't get you," said Chappie, half-mechanically

In his brain was an elated chant:

"I've got one chance—one in mebbe a hundred thousand to land."

"The wise boys rigged a wireless from the Cuba track to N'Yawk and direct private phone wire to the gin-mill down in Jersey City where Bob worked before this last switch," explained Maloney.

"It beat the cable relay from Havana to Key West and direct wire to N'Yawk by six minutes. They hit Bob hard one afternoon but they never will again."

"We'll hit him with Wraith," stoutly averred Chappie. "It's only a five furlong event, track dry, weather fair. Listen. Ain't that it comin' now?"

Maloney, too, heard the whistle of the speaking tube and a pall of silence dropped over the noisy room as the announcer picked up his megaphone.

"Results, second Havana," he bellowed. "Wraith, first—"

Chappie Hare clapped Mike Maloney on the shoulder.

"What did I tell you, eh? Oh, I'm a wise goose, I am!"

Mike Maloney did not reply—in words.

His acute ear suddenly caught the wild whirr of a buzzer inside the compartment carefully boarded over, leaving only the cat-hole for bettors to slide in their tickets.

Next instant, Mike was at an open window. Chappie Hare, as one to the manner born, was right behind him. Mike went through—Hare followed

The door to the compartment opened and a rotund gentleman with a Semitic cast of countenance, from whose cravat gleamed a yellow diamond whose scintillations heralded his coming like a searchlight, also ran wildly over and wedged through the same opening with quite creditable agility, all things considered

In the room behind was chaos. A pistol barked.

Then, through the acrid atmosphere came a command·

"Stand still, everybody!"

Everybody obeyed. The sheen of light on the naked weapons was sufficient. But, far down the field, racing like Marathon runners along the soggy fringe of the marsh, Mike Maloney, Chappie Hare, and the gentleman with the big yellow diamond pursued the wraith of freedom, while the wraith of fear rode hard at their heels

CHAPTER III

CHAPPIE BATTLES FOR HIS RIGHTS.

"WE'RE safe, now," gasped Maloney, stopping when several rows deep in a cornfield. Chappie Hare dropped down and the rotund gentleman with the yellow diamond joined them.

"Hello, Max!" said he, between exhausts and intakes. "Who's your 'riend?"

Mike Maloney seemed to sense a hidden meaning beneath the casual words. He turned his pockmarked face toward Chappie Hare.

His slit of a mouth narrowed to a short cruel line; his eyes for all their lack of luster were malevolent and his cheekbones showed livid.

"I wonder if you are a goose?" he grated

The unspoken alternative to his doubts suggested unpleasant possibilities to Chappie Hare, if Mr. Maloney felt obliged to answer "yes" to his own question.

Chappie Hare stood his ground.

"Aw, goose yer grandmother!" he rejoined inelegantly. "How about my good thing, eh? Who asked you to make a bet? Who picked the room where it would be laid? Who steered me to it—steered me miles and miles from where I was tryin' to mitt my friend Ed, a dead ringer for youse, in some ways?"

Then Chappie turned to the other.

"Here's my ticket on Wraith, and I see you managed to save part of the bank-roll," said he. "Wraith won, didn't he? Well, do I get my jack, or was all of this a plant for sucker bettors?"

The man with the yellow diamond looked over at Maloney inquiringly.

"That part of it is right," conceded the tout sullenly, answering the bank-roll man's unvoiced query. "He rapped to me for a friend, just as he says. I didn't make him, until after I flashed his roll when he bought a drink.

"Then he cracks about this sleeper at Havana—Wraith—but he didn't give me his name until just before he bet fifty straight and fifty place on him."

The bank-roll man nodded half affably.

"That part's all right," said he, "but we never pay off before confirmation. There might be a correction, you know. Such things have happened before."

"How you going to confirm after that blow by those dicks?" demanded Chappie Hare.

"The papers," suavely suggested the bank-roll man, "to-morrow will carry the returns. Why not meet me in New York, anywhere you say, and then—"

"To-morrow never comes," sagely interpolated Chappie Hare, "and then, I might be a regular goose, you know, and frame you on that side of the river.

"I guess you'll cash my ticket right now. I never seen one of them dicks in my whole life—didn't even tarry to mug 'em when they broke in.

"If I was a goose"—he whirled on Mr. Maloney—"d'ye think you'd ever got through that window? Or you?" he whirled back on the man with the money.

"No," said the bank-roll man, "that don't look like you was in on it."

"In on it?" jeered Chappie Hare. "Why, you poor fish, all I want from youse is that jack I won. In on it? And me in the room not fifteen minutes, all told? Did I know where Mike was takin' me? Ask him how we come out. Did I wig-wag anybody to tail me and, could they tail me if I did?"

The candor behind his indignation was patent to both the others.

Maloney, although cold and malignant by nature, yet had to concede the justice of Chappie Hare's contentions.

"We come by tube to Hoboken," said he, "and Larry the Owl jitneyed us out to the joint. You know Larry. Nobody tailed us."

"I ain't disputin' that," said the bank-roll man warmly, "but—"

"But your head off after you spring me for sixteen century-bills," broke in Chappie Hare with considerable asperity. "You ain't losin' on the day—not when you knock down on them poor lobby-gows that got grabbed, and you hadn't paid off on either the first or second Havana events, had you?

"Why, you got enough fat on you right now to start a young bank, and all them tickets won't be cashed. They'll hold 'em for evidence. Come on—come on—the corn's gettin' riper ever' minute. Goin' to stand there and stall until some rube drives in with his wagon to husk it?"

The bank-roll man suddenly saw a great light. Reference to the fact that he had profited for his employer on the afternoon was only part of the motive behind his decision, however; the bedraggled man facing him was typical of the crowd who sustained pool-rooms, and if given a square deal would be back to bet again and again—until the "percentage" ate him up.

From such as these came diamonds such as the bank-roll man wore; as well as the "nut" or daily expenses, including money to venal officials holding minor offices—and still there remained sufficient surplus to pay big salaries to the small army of operatives inside and outside the modern pool-room, and to supply comforts and luxuries to those who "ran the game."

Once, however, let it be noised abroad

that the bank-roll man had welched on a bet, and the contagion would spread and spread among those stricken with the racing mania, until the "play" would fall off to a point where rival rooms would profit and the welcher be forced to suspend.

So, the bank-roll man counted out the sixteen bills, and took the ticket on Wraith, which he carefully shredded and stamped into the mold from which the young corn sprang that afforded concealment for this novel transaction.

Once this was done, Chappie Hare recovered his good humor.

"Ain't it funny how luck runs?" he sapiently observed. "Looka me yesterday, in Pimlico on getaway day—down to bare bones, playing my last two berries on a three-way parley on them machines. If I hadn't knocked down that parley, I'd be walkin', right now, somewhere between Baltimore and Wilmington to git back home, instead of cashin' the only ticket of mebbe three hundred bet with youse to-day on Havana entries—out in this wild and lonely spot."

The man who had paid him was busy stuffing various rolls and wads of currency in various pockets, so they would render him less conspicuous. His maneuvers around the waist-band gave Chappie Hare an inkling that he wore a belt for such contingencies; the gleam of a pistol-butt as the wind whipped the tail of his coat aside showed that the gentleman was likewise heeled for possible trouble *en route* to and from the scenes of his daily toil.

"Well," said the bank-roll man, "we'll switch the joint again. I had a tip this was coming off. Private dicks, working with the district attorney of the county, pulled that raid.

"I switched day before yesterday, but they must 'a' had a man inside yesterday to pipe me off for that jam to-day. Just the same," he continued, "I'll be workin' up at Fort Lee to-morrow.

"Mike, give the gentleman a card. Any of the boys around the ferry will give you the office, if you want to lay another bet. I put my service wire in the new joint last night. They may move fast, but I move faster."

Chappie Hare accepted the pasteboard before remarking:

"I guess I'll do a solo, boys, grab a car for the terminal, and git back to the big town. On the level, that bunch of dicks don't know me, and I ain't got any use for a pack of wolves like them.

"You boys, of course, has got to hire lawyers and spring your own people outa the hoosegow. So-long."

"Whatcha make of him?" queried Mike as Chappie Hare disappeared toward the trolley line.

"Well, he wasn't one of them dicks, but I guess he's a grifter of some sort. Cracked right back at me with the hammer-talk, didn't he?"

"I ain't sorry to see him go," snarled Mike. "Whatcha give him that card for, if he's a grifter?"

"To see if he'll try to break in at Fort Lee to-morrow," laughed the bank-roll man. "If he *is* a dick, he thinks he's got our number. We don't work at Fort Lee at all. We're back within a block of the old joint, down-town in Jersey City; and I'll betcha none of them dicks or grifters git in with a jimmy.

"That's why I cashed Wraith for him. But if he really was a dick, I don't see why he didn't flash his tin and hold me up for all this fat!"

Chappie Hare felt similar qualms during the ride back to the Thirty-Third and Broadway terminal of the tube.

"It was a crime to let him waddle off with all that fat," he told himself, "but he wouldn't had to use so many pockets if it hadn't been for that bundle of cheap dicks rammin' in just as I had everything set.

"Dodgast my luck! I never did like a private dick, nohow. They always gum things up when they're gettin' good."

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPPIE RIDES AND RUMINATES.

AT the entrance to the tube Chappie bought an evening paper. Journalistic enterprise was evidenced by a screaming "Extra" in black letters; and in one col-

umn, poorly printed in red ink under the sub-caption of "Last Minute News," was a paragraph summarizing the raid on the New Jersey pool-room, and stating that three men had escaped the net.

It concluded with the significant words:

> Two of these are known to the detectives who have been quietly working up the evidence on the inside, and their arrest is momentarily expected

Chappie Hare gave a wry grin.

"I was sure lucky to-day," he mused, "although I didn't get near so far with my plans as I had hoped to get. If they hadn't raided when they did, I stood a fine chance to make two boob bets of a hundred each on any old dog in the third and fourth, and then nick 'em good again in the fifth.

"That would have been what I call 'beatin' the barrier.' As for the finish—well, I dunno. Got to think that out, and go up and put Eddie wise to what's come off so far."

Chappie crossed the street in a matter-of-fact manner, and, being heeled, proceeded to indulge himself the luxury of a seven-passenger touring-car labeled "For Hire."

"Getty Square, Yonkers," he directed casually.

"Are you coming back, sir?" queried the driver.

"Some day, if I live, I hope to. Why?"

"'Scuse me, sir, but the rate is five an hour, and I got to count the return trip when we go outside city limits."

"Give her the gun," returned Chappie, lighting a cigar and leaning back to commune with his own thoughts.

They were not as roseate as one would be inclined to believe. In his pocket nestled the crisp bills which the bank-roll man had paid under Chappie's slangy pressure. That comforted the thinker a little, chiefly for the reason that Chappie Hare had started out to put a crimp in the wad by fair means or otherwise.

To Chappie's way of looking at such things, the astute gamblers who "bank-rolled" an elaborate and far-reaching chain of pool-rooms, mulcting the misled patrons with the lure of easy money in the hardest game in the world to beat, were themselves as fair targets for sharp-shooting as any of their all-too-numerous dupes.

That, however, was far from the ending of Chappie's scheme of things—a scheme which he had begun not wholly of his own volition, and which, moreover, he considered himself in duty bound to see to a successful finish

It was merely the beginning, and a rather poor beginning, at that.

Poor, from Chappie's point of view, because he had gone out with the fixed intention of getting on the inside of some place much less remote—one of the many pool-rooms which were flourishing on Manhattan Island. He had tramped the streets of the lower East Side all morning; frequenting places where he was perfectly satisfied entry could be had, if the one desirous of laying a bet was known to be "right."

Chappie made no pretensions, even to himself, that he was right, in that sense of the word. To be right meant to be really as wrong as the calloused but smiling gentleman who wore the yellow diamond, who toiled not, neither did he spin; and yet the lilies of the field never wore such scarf-pins.

His first failure to get in touch with any steerer known to the pool-room fraternity did not discourage him. Chappie knew, only too well, that such receptions were to be expected. New York was in the hands of a reform administration; and all classes of predatory people were under the ban.

Of late, particularly, the town had been "tightening up," until, from Chappie's point of view, it was almost if not quite as "tight as a tenor drum."

Several people, quite high up in authority, held to the view, however, that it was far from tight. Among the people thinking thus were two—Commissioner of Police Peter Wainwright and District Attorney Dawn.

Their opinion was held in far higher esteem than that of Chappie Hare or any of the gentry who dallied with the ponies.

As a result, a fresh campaign had been inaugurated, and the crusade against pool-

rooms was being waged relentlessly. The day before one had been raided in a loft building well down in the financial district. The day before that another had been raided in an up-town apartment house in the aristocratic section of Riverside Drive.

Just how these widely separated places were uncovered was a secret to the authorities. They were very mum. It wasn't entirely politics, because the policy being enforced lacked the usual preliminary newspaper announcements

Yet, in spite of occasional raids, the pool-rooms went merrily on with their daily grind of taking bets in large numbers and in all sorts of places; and, except on rare occasions, paying back far less than their deluded patrons paid to them.

It wasn't wholly a new situation in New York.

Many previous administrations had faced the same problem. Some of them openly winked at the evil, and those in office profited accordingly; although, of course, there were occasional pretexts in the form of raids, to appease public clamor when the pool-room sharks got too raw.

This administration, however, was different.

It was trying to keep its preelection pledges; but, after one or two of the more notorious joints had been closed, the men engaged in conducting them became very wary indeed.

Only known patrons were "given the office" regarding new locations when the raided places shifted. The common clerk or occasional bettor found that he must entrust his commissions to hand-book men or waiters or barbers or bartenders on more familiar terms with the actual bank-roll men.

Hence, the dilemma of Chappie Hare, to "make a connection" and thus "get down on his good thing."

All morning he failed. He knew he looked like a cop in his dingy blue serge. But Chappie kept on, although with no results whatever, for the whole forenoon; and by noon he was assuring himself, *sotto voce*, that he hadn't one chance in a hundred thousand to carry out his carefully cherished plans.

That was not the worst of it—by any means.

Less than a week before Commissioner Wainwright and District Attorney Dawn had held a consultation. The betting evil had not been eliminated—it had merely been driven to cover.

And, as soon as one place was uncovered afresh, a raid made, the prisoners arraigned, bailed, and the other legal formalities complied with, the same men went back to "work" in some new locality.

Hence, a policy more rigorous was decided upon at this conference.

"There's one way we can be sure of closing down all of them at once," said Commissioner Wainwright. "That is to cut off the racing news. Get the telegraph and telephone companies to serve only legitimate channels—newspapers and such.

"It won't entirely eliminate it, but it will drive the big end of the profits out into the open, because it will abolish pool-rooms if they can't get the news."

"The trouble is," said his *vis-à-vis*, "that there is nothing illegal in transmitting racing information to any one. It's only the bets that are criminal. But the idea is a good one. If we can get hold of the syndicate that backs these pool-rooms, and knock them stiff, as you say, by some clever detective work, we're going to get the same results. You do that, and I'll see the gentlemen run no more pool-rooms outside of four walls up at Ossining."

Something of this, in due time, filtered to the ears of Chappie Hare, through devious police channels.

Hence, his anxiety during the morning to "get down on a good thing" while the getting was good. Moreover, Chappie had certain very good reasons for believing that Wraith would win that particular race at Havana; and although he had stated some of these reasons to Mr. Mike Maloney on meeting that tout, to whom he had given the "glad mitt" under pretext of recognition under another name, Chappie, for reasons of his own, had by no means given them all.

The chief reason for his willingness to bet a century on Wraith had not been mentioned or even hinted at. That reason was

this: Long prior to meeting Mr. Maloney, Chappie Hare had arranged with a certain gentleman named Eddie to see to it that Wraith was reported the winner of the second in Havana, no matter what horse actually did win it.

Eddie was a wizard at tapping wires.

With Chappie and Eddie were several other gentlemen who shared the common secret; known among themselves by such names as Tom, Bill, and Jake

All of which explains, in part, the feeling of no small umbrage which Chappie Hare had against the private dicks who had gummed up his game, owing to their untimely raid of the North Bergen pool-room.

Chappie's first plan had been to get into a New York pool-room. Failing in this, as narrated, he had made the best of a rather poor beginning by playing Wraith for his century, chiefly to test out his plan and that of his associates.

He could not be sure that the North Bergen place got its news from the syndicate of bank-roll men whom the New York authorities were desperately trying to suppress by clever detective work. However, it seemed that such was the case, for Wraith had come in on the announcement, just the same as if the wire which Eddie had tapped was the "big feeder" to the syndicate.

All of which flitted through Chappie Hare's mind as he rode out to Yonkers; and which, in part, accounted for his feeling of dissatisfaction at the net results of the day.

The fact that he had "knocked down" a clear profit of fifteen hundred dollars did not assuage his feeling that he had really "pulled a bloomer."

Most investors of a hundred dollars, shoved through a cat-hole in the wall for a few minutes, would have been very well pleased at getting their hundred back and fifteen hundred more—even in a corn-field.

Chappie Hare was not an investor, in the strict sense of the term. He was a man who took chances. Between these two occupations there is a very large gap—and in that gap are hazards which the timid would shrink from.

Again, Chappie was not timid. He had proved this by battling for his rights with the bank-roll man in the corn-field—proved it by a dashing attack preceded by a machine-gun fire of slang and facts, driving his enemy to a swift surrender by paying the bet.

It had been touch-and-go for a minute.

When the bank-roll man tried to stall with the "confirmation in to-morrow's papers," Chappie had felt those bills slipping. He knew that he had to win then and there—or see all his plans thus far wrecked; for the wire Eddie had tapped was not the wire over which the morning papers got their racing stories from their special writers in Cuba.

Those stories came by cable to New York; whereas the racing news as flashed after each event came, as Mike Maloney had told Chappie, by cable to Key West and by land wire direct to New York.

Chappie's iron nerve and ready repartee —to say nothing of his broad hints that the bank-roll man hadn't lost anything in cash—saved the sixteen bills.

But that was all it had saved. It had not saved the chance to bet on the fifth race and knock down the other good thing which Eddie had ready to send as if it were the actual winner. Hence, Chappie's trip to confer with his confederates and lay new plans for the morrow.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPPIE'S WORK AND THE WRAITH.

CHAPPIE paid the chauffeur. When he was out of sight he stepped into a cigar-stand, bought a handful of good smokes, stepped outside the stand, and hired another vehicle, this time a closed taxi.

Through the rear oval-shaped window he saw that he was not followed when he started for Mount Vernon. Two blocks farther on he rapped sharply on the glass, indicated a short cut to the chauffeur, and sent his machine spinning through it to another street.

Pitching down a steep hill, winding in and out with all sorts of pavements under

his rather antiquated vehicle, Chappie finally drew up alongside a carpet factory, got out, gave the astonished driver a five-dollar bill, and then vanished down a steep bank.

Presently he was in a railway station.

His curious manner of getting there was *prima-facie* evidence that he did not wish to be followed. It seemed somewhat conclusive when Chappie caught a train inbound for Yonkers, alighting at the main station, dodging through the tunnel, and coming up on the other side in time to catch a north-bound train which came sparking in.

The next stop that his train made was in the same locality which District Attorney Dawn had promised Commissioner Wainwright would be the future residence of any of the pool-room syndicate who might be unearthed by clever detective work—in short, Ossining, New York, better known by the double-barreled misnomer of Sing Sing.

Chappie thought of the way he had heard of this prophecy of the chief law officer of the county of New York as he climbed the hill and skirted the very gates of the prison itself. Recollection impelled him to smile at the irony of the thing.

Wraith had come in over a wire which "Eddie the Wiz," as Chappie and the others designated him, had taken temporarily under his wing; and Chappie knew more, right now, than the worthy Mr. Dawn ever dreamed about the syndicate's methods of operation; more, probably, than he would ever imagine, even if he lived to the age accredited to Methuselah.

This fact inspired Chappie Hare's smile.

He was thinking of Methuselah—chiefly because there was an old "stake-horse" by that name at Havana—and his biblical namesake, who is said to have departed his life at the extremely ripe age of nine hundred and sixty-nine years.

Even if Mr. Dawn lived to such a gorgeously grand extension of the average human span of life, and even if he held his present position during all of that miraculous period, Chappie Hare felt reasonably sure that Mr. Dawn would never dream of looking for the syndicate's wire-service in the vicinity of Ossining, New York, any more than he would dream of attaining greater fame than was already his by starting a modern refrigerating plant at the north pole.

Chappie Hare was no dreamer. He was very matter of fact. His methods were simple.

He accepted the chances of a given undertaking with eyes open, and he accepted the hazards, when necessary, without a tremor. Chappie himself would never have dreamed of finding the syndicate's main trunk-wire or of ensconcing himself in the vicinity of the city whose fame rests chiefly on the location of the Empire State's strong-box for criminals.

Chappie, even had he been a *ne-plus-ultra* dreamer, would never have imagined such an absurd thing, any more than the bank-roll man with the yellow diamond gleaming like a search-light in his cravat had reason to imagine that the suspected grifter who came back at him so hard with hammer-talk in a corn-field after a raid by private dicks had first planned a phony winner of the second race at Havana, through the magical finesse of Eddie the Wiz.

Chappie had one other good quality. Although given to the habit of mental self-flagellation—like assuring himself that he had "pulled a bloomer" that afternoon—he did not worry, in the strict sense of the term, over his private affairs.

He had not worried over the thought that some astute dick of the agency which had engineered the raid at North Bergen might have "mugged" him when in company with Mr. Mike Maloney; although the fact that such might be and probably was the case had flitted into his mind when he noted the newspaper paragraph that three men had escaped, two were known, and "their arrest was momentarily expected."

Chappie didn't give a hoot in Hoboken whether any private dick had mugged him or not that afternoon; nor if, for that matter, a whole regiment of agency men had given him the "ferret-eye" and would surely know him again.

But he was equally careful that none of

them should "cover" him to where Eddie the Wiz, and Bill, Tom, and Jake "hung out."

That fact alone was back of Chappie's devious détours and back-trackings before coming to this place—that and the original plan on which he was working, owing to the police news from "big-finger"——that is to say, the police commissioner himself –as previously stated.

Chappie had a certain object to attain; and attain it he would, despite all the touts, agency "stiffs," or other human beings in office or out—if patience, perseverance, and a curious, oblique method of attaining that object would bring the thing about.

For various very good reasons, hardly had Commissioner Wainwright arrived at the decision regarding cutting off the wire-service to the pool-rooms by clever detective work, than Chappie Hare had started on an expedition fraught with profound secrecy.

Eddie the Wiz was the first man to whom Chappie broached his singular plan: and one by one Bill, Tom, and Jake had been approached and brought into knowledge of Chappie's grand scheme.

Chappie knew them all, and they all knew each other. That made the first step extremely simple.

Chappie stated the first step in his usual blunt fashion.

"Boys, I want to locate and cut in on a certain trunk-wire that runs into Manhattan. It carries the racing news, results, and all that, to the pool-rooms. There may be one chance in a hundred thousand of our finding that wire.

"All I know is it's somewhere in Manhattan. I want to find it, cut in on it, and then do a whole lot of things—mebbe. I want you boys to help me, and whatever pickin's comes out of my scheme I'm willin' to share with you. Are you with me?"

They were, to a man. Whereupon, the committee of the whole, with Chappie acting as chairman, Eddie the Wiz, Bill, Tom, and Jake, went into what is known in parliamentary circles as executive session—that is to say, they privately discussed the whole matter, from "A to izzard," in the frankest fashion.

"It 'll be one long, long job," at length opined Jake, "to go tappin' all the wires around this reformed town."

"Too long for us to try it," agreed Chappie. "We got to do it some other way."

Tom tuned his vocal chords long enough to remark that even when a tapping job was done by and with the knowledge of a supreme court judge, the "tappee," so to speak, set up an awful squawk.

"We'll have to keep to the blind side of everybody," warned Chappie. "This here job can't be done under anybody's hat but ourn."

"Let's hear from Eddie," said Bill sagely. "Eddie's a wizard with wires."

Thus adjured, Eddie reluctantly shed his reticence.

"We might cut a thousand wires in this town, and hit nine hundred with racin' Morse on 'em all and then be in as bad as when we started—because they'd all be branches," said Eddie the Wiz. "You said you wanted to tap the trunk line, didn't you—the one that carries the info' to the syndicate?"

"You said it," agreed Chappie Hare.

"Lemme think a minit," said Eddie. "This here is a new one on all of us. It's a pretty big order, if you don't mind my sayin' it, Chappie."

"That's why I sent for all of yous," retorted Chappie Hare. "If I could have handled this job alone I'd kept all the pickin's, too."

He pulled out his watch and noted the second-hand. In exactly fifty-eight of the little jerks Eddie set up with a bigger jerk.

"We're at war, boys," said he oracularly. "The gov'ment is loaded down with all kinds of work—includin' wire work. Now, in the old days, this stuff would come direct.

"Wire chiefs would insist on efficiency. They're still insistin' on it, but it's Uncle Sam's business that they're so efficient about; and that lets out every cable crossing under both rivers runnin' down on either side of Manhattan

"'Cause why? Censor. This stuff is still comin' in. If it gits on Manhattan Island, it's arc lamps against candles it

comes down from the north or east, after being relayed from around the bonnie brier bush, Robin Hood's farm, or Heaven alone knows where!"

"You're a wiz, all right, all right," returned Chappie. "Get your cut-in outfit, and we'll lam outa town right away. Anybody or anything can get into Manhattan from the north or east, but Uncle Sam knows who's who when they try to git out. That goes, too, for letters and telegrams. They're all censored."

Followed several days of arduous and fruitless work. One engaged in tapping wires without knowledge of other than the tapper must choose time and place with care.

When four men are so engaged, and compelled to work during the daytime, because the racing information is sent while the ponies are just getting ready to race or just after they have "dropped dead in the stretch," the enterprise is one that calls for a certain adroitness; also special electrical knowledge and cold-blooded nerve, lest it come to sudden grief because of various technical precautions against that very thing taken by reputed electrical wizards of greater or less skill—known as "wire chiefs" by the companies employing them.

Just as Chappie Hare had outgeneraled the bank-roll man in the cornfield, so Eddie the Wiz had previously outgeneraled everybody in the territory selected for finding that trunk line carrying racing information.

By adroit maneuvers which more than once skirted the perilous precipice of discovery, by subtle "cuts" and "resplices," they worked their way from the eastern border of the Long Island Sound in Westchester County westward, through the interior, and tested every wire above ground. Those paralleling the various railways were the hardest; the interior wires along highways were far easier to handle.

Eddie played no favorites. Phone and Morse circuits were alike subjected to scrutiny at the hours when racing information should be transmitted.

Their labors of almost two solid weeks were absolutely fruitless

At last, like soldiers in a forlorn and desperate defense of a strip of land "over there," Chappie and his associates literally stood with "their backs to the wall," only the wall was the Hudson River, just above Ossining.

Then, literally in their last "quarter-hour" of work and almost on the last wire tested, Eddie the Wiz, straddling the insecure summit of an extension stepladder while Chappie held the base, cut in on a circuit not far from Sing Sing Prison itself.

His instruments showed the current was far too sluggish to carry the usual Morse signals; and he switched to another resistance-box, clapping on his ear-pieces more as a matter of routine than with any hope whatever.

A curious, perplexed—even mystified—look flitted across the cherubic features of Eddie the Wiz. Chappie, gripping the ladder near a squat pole carrying five crossbars, and supporting a total of thirty-two wires, noted the transformation.

"Holy cats!" quoth Eddie the Wiz, *"there's a wraith on this wire!"*

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPPIE FINDS "THE WRAITH."

"WRAITH?" echoed Chappie Hare. "Whad d'ye mean by wraith?"

"It's a new one on me," replied the Wiz, "and I been juggling ohms, watts, amperes, volts, and all that since I was a kid—to say nothin' of readin' the guff that rode on 'em. Wait a minute!"

He balanced like a Japanese juggler, whipped out a pencil and pad, noted the time, and began writing. Then he shunted the circuit again into its legitimate channel by pressing a switch, tore off his headpieces, and came tumbling down.

"What do you know about that?" he demanded. "A circuit that's too weak to carry a Morse signal is chattering with *racing Morse* on it. We're just as close to Pimlico as that pole is. Looky here!"

He spread out the bit of paper.

Chappie took it with distended eyes.

Play a three-way-parley for twenty dollars straight on Stargazer, Colonel Tucker, and Nile Maiden with Hirshberg. If money,

settle on newspaper closing odds. Leave tonight for Atlantic City

BOB HUNTER.

Chappie handed back the scrap of paper. "I know Bob Hunter," said he, "and if that pole was Pimlico I'd play that parley myself. But, Eddie, what the devil are we going to do now?

"We can't cut in and send a phony winner, can we, to the poolrooms? And, are you sure that we've hit the real racing-feeder?"

Eddie the Wiz gave a grimace.

"Chappie, I ain't sure I'm alive after what I just heard on that wire. Ghosts is outa my line. It's a ghost, though—and no high-potential ghost, at that.

"Why, that wire ain't got enough current to carry a message in Morse hooked into a learner's outfit and yet it can be read. I know the message I just read is going south to our town," he waved down the river, "and after I've listened in some more, why, I can tell you if it's the feeder we've been feelin' for. Say!"

"You say it," urged Chappie, while Tom, Jake, and Bill gathered round.

"Send Tom down to Ossining and let him get a copy of to-day's *Morning Telegraph* with the entries and weights for Pimlico. That meet is near getaway, I think.

"I'll listen-in, meanwhile, and when Tom gets back, I can tell if this is a real feeder or only a branch private wire."

It was so ordered and duly done.

Comparison showed that it was indubitably the coveted feeder, but Chappie's face reflected no light of triumph. As the Wiz had frankly admitted, there was no resolving this mystery by the usual technical methods.

It had been a part of Chappie's original plan—although merely a very small part of his whole grand scheme—to "cut in" on the main trunk that carried racing results to New York poolrooms direct from the various tracks; to "put down a few bets," as he expressed it, and "knock the bankroll men stiff" by sending a phony winner or two, some day.

This, also, was no more of a novelty than the police of New York conducting a spectacular "raid" on some poolroom, battering down doors with axes, and confiscating apparatus and memoranda for "evidence."

All great plans, however, must have a beginning; and for reasons of his own Chappie Hare decided to begin as stated.

He had made a little progress in locating the wire; but, oddly enough, he was practically as far away from his betting idea as he had been when he started out.

"As I told you at first, Chappie," explained the Wiz when the comparison had been finished and the results of the day's races were known, "so far as knowing anything is concerned, we're as close to Pimlico or Havana as that there pole. But, when it comes to cutting-in how can I do it? I don't even know how they get those ghosts across."

Chappie nodded gloomily.

"I didn't think we had one chance in a hundred thousand," he admitted, "but I started in to see this through and I'm going to see it through, ghosts or no ghosts. We may run into something worth while yet.

"Do you think, Eddie, that this is a scheme of the syndicate's to keep anybody from sendin' them a phony winner and hittin' them in a dozen or fifteen poolrooms at once?"

"If it is a scheme, it's one that works," frowned the Wiz. "But what gets me is how they put it across? If I knew that, I might be able to backfire 'em, but until I do, I think we're jammed.

"You see, Chappie, if they are relying on that ghost to keep carrying their info' and news, and if they think—as you just asked me if I thought—the ghost was part of a plan to keep any smart lobby-gow from puttin' over a phony winner, why, if we could find some way to do that we'd have them by the neck.

"We could hit 'em everywhere all at once, clean up and blow, before they could tumble at all. But we could only do it once—they'd fold the very next day—and only settle after one lickin' by next day's newspaper odds."

"You said a forkful," nodded Chappie Hare. "Now, take that wire from Bob Hunter. I know Bob. Every copper in New York used to do business with him in the old days.

"But they didn't do it in New York. Bob used to meet them down to Atlantic City. The syndicate has a room there, too.

"Do you get the drift of that? Bob sends a private message to somebody, somewhere—who is also a syndicate man. Bob wouldn't sign his name to that message, unless he knew his wire was proof against a cut-in. We don't know where he sent it or to whom.

"Pass that for a minute. The point is, he sent it from Pimlico and he's on his way to Atlantic City. Now this administration ain't doin' business with the syndicate—they're tryin' to put the syndicate out of business. Bob is bank-rollin' his own game in Atlantic City probably.

"Now, Eddie, everything that comes in on that trunk wire must come from somewhere—it can't come from nowhere, can it?"

"I said part of it come from Pimlico. The rest of it come from Havana. Look at that *Telegraph*—the fifth entries for today—Methuselah, that old skate's been runnin' since Bryan first run for President. I got him, too, thanks to that wraith on the wire. He run absolutely last.

"Not a chance. Methuselah had more chance to win that race, though, than I got to cut in and send a phony winner with regular Morse on a circuit with no current."

"Then," declared Chappie Hare, with a sudden clamping of his jaws, "the first thing we got to do, Eddie, is to find where that wraith hangs out."

"How d'ye spell that name?" demanded Tom, who was studying the racing-sheet he had brought up from Ossining

Eddie the Wiz intoned the letters slowly: "W-r-a i-t-h!"

"Why, there's a dog by that name in this rag!" exploded Tom. "I call that a hunch. He's at Havana."

The rest of them fell on the sheet as one man

Chappie Hare grinned broadly.

"Tom's dead right, Eddie. Now, here's my next idea: If that current is so weak it can't travel a long distance, can it?"

"It wouldn't pump baby-food out of a bottle layin' on its side," declared the Wiz.

"Oh—I get you. Since it carries the news south—we'll follow it to the north—run down this wraith—is that it?"

"You're a wiz, all right," smiled Chappie. "Stick in a neat splice, and we'll follow that wire straight back to Pimlico, if we have to, to find where Mr. Wraith hangs out."

They promptly "cached" all evidence of their recent activities in a convenient hollow, then struck out on foot to follow the wire. It was the lowest of them all and on the inside of the lowest cross-bar. Before they had traversed five hundred yards of rough going, the wire bent to the right, in a thick clump of leafy trees, and the next insulation was on a giant elm.

Like dogs on a scent they followed it. Another hundred yards, and in a spot so primeval that it might have been a thousand miles from giddy Gotham, in a little rocky vale, which apparently had been a stone-quarry in bygone years, the wire dipped sharply downward.

It vanished into a maze of vines and branches of trees.

Chappie and his valiant band slid, rolled, tumbled, and walked down the precipitous sides of the old pit to again take up the trail of the wraith on the wire.

A dozen yards from the point of their descent they came upon a tiny, weather-beaten cabin, snuggling against the rocks, masked from view by trees and the verdure clinging to the walls of the old quarry.

On the eaves of this structure was the last insulator before the wraith-wire penetrated the interior.

Chappie signaled a halt.

Ensued a cautious reconnoiter. No sign of human beings being discernible, Eddie and Chappie crept forward, like Iroquois braves stalking the cabin of a rash pioneer. Near the cabin they paused again.

The Wiz laid one hand on Chappie's arm.

"Listen to that," he growled. "It's Morse—and it ain't ghost-telegraphy either—regular long-distance stuff. I wonder why it is so loud in that cabin and so faint on the wire

"We're up against something brand new, Chappie—newer than anything I ever got up against before."

"Well," said Chappie, "let's mug the joint. We ain't got anything to lose, anyhow, because the way the thing stands now we're nailed to the cross after all our hard work."

In ten more strides Chappie Hare had reached the door.

It wasn't even locked. In a trice the Wiz was by his side, scanning the interior with eager eyes. In one corner, on a small kitchen-table, a long-distance relay of standard type was tapping, and yoked to it a giant sounder, with a reverberating box echoing every tap so fast the sounds were one. Right in front of the giant sounder, bending over at right angles as if to make sure of missing no signal, stood Eddie's "wraith"—an ordinary telephone-receiver, on an open circuit.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPPIE'S "WRAITH" TAKES THE WARPATH.

BETWEEN the time of that discovery and the return of Chappie Hare to Ossining the following day to again confer with the Wiz about his adventures in betting a horse by the same name, a number of things transpired.

First and foremost, Eddie found no difficulty in going to a point on the Morse circuit above where it entered the cabin from the north and "cutting in" so that he could send phony winners the following day.

The Wiz was hugely delighted, on the whole; and it was his suggestion to Chappie Hare that they play the Havana entry, which Tom had noted in the racing news by the name of "Wraith."

"It wouldn't be a bad hunch to play that other old dog, Methuselah," added Chappie, "in the fifth race. He's been running so long that the handicappers won't give him any place but dead-last. So there'll be a juicy price on him, too.

"Tell you what we'll do, fellers; Bill, Tom, and Jake can all go down-town tonight and hunt up a room or a hand-book man and get down on both of 'em. I'll lay a century on the same goats—on Wraith to win the second and Meth-Who's-It for the fifth.

"That ought to get us a little sugar, cigarette, and shine money. The big blow-off will come later if we have any luck."

It was so ordered. Tom knew a pool-room on One Hundred and Sixteenth Street, where he could "get by"; Jake knew a barber who knew a hand-book man near Longacre Square, and Bill, a waiter in one of the biggest hotels who was such a friend that he sometimes played tips of his own by folding a list of entries and sticking a pin through it.

When Chappie Hare came back up to the deserted quarry where the wraith had been first found the day before, he plunged into the undergrowth and kept on nearly a half-mile to where Eddie had cut in on the Morse circuit, at a point well to the north of where it entered the cabin.

Eddie was still on duty at the rupture of the heavy circuit.

"Can you beat it?" he grinned as Chappie came over to where he was squatting on a box. "That dog, Wraith, ran a regular race and won without a struggle. I didn't have to send him spurious. But I did hand it to them in the fifth, with Methuselah! Did you knock 'em both down?"

Chappie shook his head, lugubriously, and then sketched his somewhat hectic experiences.

"It's too bad," he said. "I thought I had one chance in mebbe a hundred thousand to start in to knock that syndicate so stiff they'd yell for the embalmer. But them private dicks gummed me up—and now, to-morrow, we can't do a thing. That Meth-Who's-It gives us dead away."

"Well, Bill and Tom and Jake will cash," suggested the Wiz, "and besides, fifteen bills ain't so bad as it might be."

"It's a spit," said Chappie Hare. "Tom may knock down a couple of grand, but Jake and Bill may have to wait until to-morrow for a pay-off. Then they don't get anything but Wraith.

"Now, Eddie, is there any way we could find out where that wraith-wire runs to from here? Any possible way we could trace it down to the distributin'-room, where the syndicate works? If I had that location, Eddie, we're all made—for life!"

"There ain't even a chance in a hundred

thousand we could follow it through," said Eddie, sapiently. "First, because, being on a telephonic circuit, they only use it for receivin'—see?"

"Yes."

"They don't blow back on that wire at all," went on the Wiz, "and that keeps us from picking up something that might give us a tumble to where the lay-out you want to find is located. Every wire, Chappie, as you know, the minute it hits a certain section in the Bronx, does a dive into the cable conduits.

"No—I'm sorry. We can't spot the boys that this wraith chatters to any way I can see. Hello, here comes Tom!"

"I scalped 'em proper," said their fellow conspirator, displaying a sheaf of bills. "Got twenty to one, track odds, on Wraith. Bet fifty on him to win and knocked down a grand. Bet 'em back two rube bets of two hundred each in the third and fourth—lose 'em both; then bet four hundred straight on Methusaleh in the fifth.

"Got twenty-five to one on him and the roof blamed near blew off the joint when they shoved this kale through the window. Say, Jake and Bill don't get theirs until to-morrow, and they're both down at the village, waiting. When do we eat?"

"I want to stick on this circuit a bit," said Eddie, "for I may get some more private stuff. Chappie and you can go down and meet Tom and Jake. I'll join you later."

Chappie demurred.

"Tom can go back now," said he, "and we'll all beat it for home after you resplice, Eddie. We're on a dead card now.

"I hate to quit, but when a wiz like you tells me we can't trace our wraith south of here—it's all off, ain't it?"

"You never can tell," said Eddie sententiously. "The breaks we get in this game ain't in any book, and if they was there wouldn't be any game to play."

He relapsed into silence, listening to the racing chatter that was going over the circuit—aftermath of the getaway day at Pimlico, overnight entries for next day's Havana races, stable gossip and the reports of various "clockers"—all of which the syndicate's experts would retail on the morrow for the information of their customers at various still undiscovered "joints" in Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, and the suburbs, generally.

Eddie watched Chappie accompany Tom to the highway and disappear.

When ten minutes had passed and no sign of Chappie returning was visible, Eddie decided to remain a little longer, then resplice and fade out forever from the vicinity of the wraith on the wire.

He was still waiting for Chappie to reappear twenty minutes later, when a new and more perplexing phenomenon than that which had puzzled him the day previous suddenly set his nerves tingling with the incomprehensible mystery of—of everything.

The wraith on the wire was now calling—calling—calling—"BUN—BUN—BUN," not from the north, where the former Morse had been coming, for the touch was more precise, delicate, even velvety—but from the south, somewhere, and signing, "FSN."

Eddie the Wiz could scarcely credit his senses.

It was bad enough for him to have been thoroughly fuddled at finding Morse on a circuit too weak to carry Morse, as he had done the day before; and, until the discovery of the open telephone circuit, Eddie had no solution whatever for such apparitional telegraphy. But this was far worse.

How could the wraith on the wire send back Morse on the same flabby telephonic circuit, tick it through an open transmitter to make it register on only a sounder and relay—for there was no key in the circuit in the cabin—and then whistle it backward over the very circuit on which Eddie was now "hooked-in," with such speed and precision?

The wraith on the wire, however, heeded not his mood.

Presently, from the north, and again in the firmer rhymth of the veteran "op" came "I -I—I—BUN."

"O. K.," flashed the wraith. "Has your wire been working well to-day?"

"As usual. Why?"

"They ripped one room for ten grand with a phony winner in fifth. Did you send Methuselah?"

"Do you think I'm wormy in my loft? No, I sent the winner—Maypole."

"O. K. Then it must be near here!"

Eddie the Wiz could feel his hair rise at the last word. It was enigmatic, but suggested rather uncomfortable possibilities.

The next interchange knocked the Wiz stiffer than Chappie Hare had ever hoped to knock the "syndicate" if his "hundred-thousand-to-one" chance should materialize in just the way he had planned to carry out his grand idea at its finale.

"Thanks—Maypole O. K. We got Methuselah and confirmation. Hit us hard. Ten grand. But he didn't get far. Grabbed him near big jail. He still had it on him. Not ten minutes ago. He won't nick anybody else this season. Lay your big odds on that. Nor the goofer that cut in—"

The Wiz suddenly lost interest in the balance of the interchange.

The light, delicate touch of the sender on the wraith-wire from the south was no criterion to what that same hand might do once it ceased working the key and sought other duties as hinted.

Twilight had already deepened into eery shadows among the trees. In the semidarkness Eddie felt impelled to move and move without delay. Just in which direction was a thing he had to decide. The highway would be dangerous, for Tom had been "snared" out there.

How many men were in on this plan to wreak vengeance on those who would despoil them Eddie had no way of knowing, except they would come with enough to make it a good job.

The use of the words "near here" was both significant and sinister.

"I ain't no wizard, I'm a boob," Eddie told himself as he slid for the trunk of a big tree. "Why didn't I think to look under that table for a sending-circuit leading out somewhere to a key hooked up with that relay and sounder? It can't be far from here—" Far or near, just then things faded out for the Wiz

He went down without a sound. Over him bent a figure with a tiny but very businesslike blackjack—a figure in gray shepherd's plaid, with hat to match and patent-leather shoes.

Mr. Maloney's pockmarked face was as emotionless as his lack-luster eyes when he knelt and deftly rifled his victim of all that was valuable, including a pistol. Then, with a squirm that suggested a spotted-gray snake, he wormed back into the trees and was blotted out in the falling curtain of the night.

Not long afterward the Wiz sat up, looked around, took off his cap, and contemplated a newspaper inside it neatly folded. His caution to leave nothing around loose by which the work of Chappie Hare's men might be traced had led him to put the newspaper in his cap, as his pockets were full to overflowing with various implements of the craft.

"That," the Wiz assured himself a little shakily, "was sure what Chappie calls 'beatin' the barrier.' I ain't so old as Methuselah, but I'm old enough to know them entries, form-chart, and turf gossip helped a whole lot to keep me from listenin' any longer to a lotta hummin'-birds playin' the anvil chorus inside my bean."

Still dazed he rose unsteadily to his feet. Next instant Chappie Hare was calling his name.

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CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPPIE COOKS AND CONJECTURES.

"SOFT pedal!" whispered Eddie. "For the wraith is loose with a wallop-knob. He just walloped me."

Chappie rushed over and inquired details. Eddie gave them, but failed to mention what had happened to Tom. He was still "merry-go-rounding" inside, but when Chappie Hare whipped out a very business-looking "gat," the Wiz began mechanically to disengage his apparatus, after which he respliced the cut-in in a manner clever enough to defy any but the most minute inspection.

When he had finished, the wire did not even sag

"Let's get down to Ossining and join the rest of the boys at the station," suggested Chappie Hare, after prowling around to make sure that the coast was clear

"This wraith business ain't what it's

cracked up to be in the books. How do you feel now? How did they get onto your work?"

"Oh, I'll be all right when I come around Let's go down to your flat in Harlem and try to piece this puzzle together there," said the Wiz.

Chappie Hare approved the plan. Bill and Jake were mooching around the street near the station, and when Chappie and Eddie came into view, they promptly scampered across the tracks ahead and down to the south-bound train platform.

Then Jake asked casually:

"Where's Tom?"

Chappie didn't know.

"I thought he come down the road ahead of us to tell you two we'd be along later," said their leader. "I walked with him to pretty near the place where the wraith-wire leaves the pole for the cabin. Didn't you see him?"

"The only thing I seen," said Jake, "since Tom went up to see you, was a big tourin'-bus, with the top up, going down past here, and a gink with a big spark in his choker givin' her all she'd stand. She took that hill on high—which is sure sneezin'."

Chappie Hare vented a series of staccato exclamations not current in polite literature.

"Did you see the number of that bus?"

"I got good eyes," said Jake, "but not good enough to look through a smooch of dust, smoke, and oil making such a young tornado. But what's that got to do with Tom?"

Chappie tersely told the experience of Eddie the Wiz. Then to that cherubic young individual, who seemed little the worse physically for his adventure:

"What kind of a lookin' strong-arm stiff was this, Eddie?"

"His mush was close to mine when he rolled me and it didn't have any more pits in it than this syndicate you're tryin' to trim is full of trained ghosts. Gray hat and suit, with varnished feet."

Just here the Wiz recalled the wraith's previous message and its reference to Tom, which he also narrated.

Chappie Hare's face was a study in bewilderment.

"That hooks it up," said he at last. "They grabbed Tom and are off to their hang-out. The wraith told his pal somethin' like that on the wire, before this Maloney cracked you on the conk, you say, Eddie?"

Eddie had only time to nod as a south-bound train drew in.

"We're goin' back to my flat for somethin' to eat and then figure out what we'll do next to this wraith thing," declared Chappie. "Come on."

Until they had taxied from the Harlem Railway station to Chappie's bachelor establishment a solemn silence wrapped the party round. Once in and after their ablutions had been performed, Chappie went madly to work mixing various concoctions in a chafing-dish and preparing a huge pot of coffee.

In a trice the hungry men were flanked by delicious Welsh rabbits, and neither the mystery nor the misfortunes which they had endured in their quest seemed to affect their appetites. All of them ate with gusto.

"I got some of this puzzle pieced together now," said Chappie Hare as he lighted a cigar. "Now, Jake and Bill, you don't know what happened to me before I come back to Eddie. Get this and the rest will sorter fit in, I guess."

He sketched his experiences with Maloney, the North Bergen poolroom, and then to the epochal conflict in the cornfield, where he had left the pock-marked gentleman with the bank-roll chap.

"From there, here is what probably happened," said Chappie, leaning forward on the table. "Maloney, remember, give me a blow for a goose, right from the start. And, at that, I do look so much like a dick that he's more than half right.

"Now, after them private agency stiffs busted in and the three of us busted out, while Maloney couldn't connect me with them—which you boys of course know is truth—neither him nor that bank-roll gazabo wanted to see any more of me.

"They didn't take a Hackensack car back to Hoboken, like I did. What I *think* they did is this:

"They musta took it through the fields off north, until they struck the Leonia line

runnin' to Fort Lee; crossed the ferry there, and probably both went to the One Hundred and Sixteenth Street poolroom.

"Tom was there. He'd knocked down Wraith in the second Havana race just as I had burned 'em over in North Bergen."

"That ain't such bad dope," said Jake. "What else, Chappie?"

"Well, of course, Tom didn't know any more than I didn't know, at that time that Wraith had really won; he figured Eddie was puttin' over phony winners. So, as Tom himself told me up by the cut-in, he played two rube bets for two hundred apiece in the third and fourth; and then he bets back four hundred on Methuselah in the fifth—bet it, mind you, like he'd bet Wraith and the others—on the nose.

"By this time, I figger, both Maloney and the bank-roll man musta been behind the wall; and they took a peep at this little stranger who was shoving wads of jack at 'em. Before this, too, they'd bought a newspaper at the ferry, more'n likely, the same as I did at the tube down-town, and had seen how they was mugged by the private dicks and the dicks was likely to glom them.

"Now they had me all gunned over as off-color—that much I know. Here was another guy that don't look like a dick at all.

"Tom looks like a sophomore ready to give anybody the 'rah-rah' razzle-dazzle; but, both Maloney and that bank-roll man know you can't always tell from the looks of a frog how far he's goin' to jump."

A chorus of assent greeted the various deductions Chappie Hare had thus far drawn. The other three were now aflame with interest in what he would say next. It was not entirely by accident that Chappie was their leader and they were all but breathless with expectancy for the disclosure trembling on his lips.

Chappie Hare resumed, calmly and slowly, as if the matter-of-fact intellect he owned was selecting the wheat from the chaff before each word voiced itself.

"Now, Tom bets back all the rest of the fat he's nicked that poolroom for when he knocked down Wraith—bets it back on Methuselah in the fifth at Havana four hundred berries at twenty-five to one. Four hundred times twenty-five is ten grand. Even if they hadn't never seen me at all and there hadn't been a blow-off over in North Bergen—even if the police and district attorney here in Manhattan wasn't after them night and day—a bet of that size from a strange mush in that room would be sure to make the lads who cashed it take a peep at the lucky lobby-gow that stung 'em for ten grand."

"I'll bet all the ghosts that ever hung out in a dry cell you call the turn, Chappie!" exclaimed Eddie. "I ain't a wiz—I'm a rummy alongside of that kind of piercing up the plot. Shoot some more, will you?"

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPPIE CONTINUES THE CONFERENCE.

"WELL, the rest ain't hard," said Chappie Hare modestly. "Tom grabs off ten grand. Mind you, I'd 'a' played Methuselah myself over in the North Bergen joint but for them cheap agency stiffs floatin' in to gum up my grand idea!

"And, neither Tom nor I know yet that Wraith wasn't phony. But, take it from me, Maloney and the bank-roll guy know he ain't phony—just as they know Methuselah *is* phony a little while after Tom blows out!"

"I don't see how you get that?" said Jake. "Eddie sent 'em both, and sent the confirmation for Methuselah instead of Mayflower—reg'lar way, and on their own wraith wire—didn't you, Eddie?"

"I sure did! And Chappie knows I told him I did, too."

"Sure you did—I don't deny it! But, boys, Tom didn't stay to play the sixth race—at least he got back up here rather quick if he did—and, besides, he'd blowed back already with two rube bets in the fourth and fifth to make things look right. After he knocked down the last of our own two good things, what would he hang around to make another boob bet for?"

"You sure drive nails straight," commented Bill, who, until now, had maintained a singular reticence as to comments. "Keep firin', Chappie; we'll be over on

top of this here wraith pretty quick. I feel it in my bones!"

The narrator complied.

"Tom is happy! After this hard work we done he knows that between all of us we knocked that syndicate stiff—on move No. 1. Knocked 'em in spite of their one-way wraith wire.

"He grabs that fat and blows out of that joint. Now, if you was that particular bank-roll man and had to be suspicious to hold your job, what would you do?"

"Tail him!" said Jake.

"No," corrected Chappie Hare, "you wouldn't, after you'd just beat it through a window and done a Marathon down into a lotta young corn, to keep from bein' slammed into a Jersey hoosegow! Mind you, bank-roll men can read, and Maloney's pockmarks don't affect his eyes, neither.

"You was half right, Jake. You'd have *somebody else* tail him—because you're under cover yourself until the North Bergen blow-off is either squared or pigeonholed."

"That's right," assented Jake.

"Nobody tailed me," said Chappie Hare, "because I took pains to prevent that little thing. Now, what next? Look at it the way Maloney and the bank-roll man look at it.

"They start a tail after Tom, and Tom comes straight up to Ossining. So does the tail. Tom keeps on up the road, into the woods, and meets me. What does the tail do? He scoots back to some phone-booth and calls up either Maloney or the bank roll man.

"By this time the sixth race at Havana has been pulled off the newspapers have got out their sport editions, and the flash of the real winner of the fifth, which is Mayflower and not Methuselah, is in them same papers. Either Maloney or the bank-roll man know this by the time the tail telephones.

"And here is Tom, after nickin' that fat gink's roll for ten grand—you can add it up from there yourselves. What would you boys do if you was Maloney and the guy that's minus the fat? Wouldn't you try for it—just once? And would you be particular about how you tried for it?

"I pulled another bloomer—an awful bloomer—when I let Tom go back down the road with that sheaf of green goods on him. Now, Jake afterward seen the bank-roll man in the buzz-buggy, and Eddie seen the pockmarks that Maloney can't hide.

"Maloney and the bank-roll man knew—they couldn't help knowin'—that somebody'd cut in on their wraith wire to put over that Methuselah. But nobody can send Morse this side of that bent telephone receiver—current's too weak, as Eddie said, to pump baby food outa a bottle layin' on its side.

"Where would they go to get Tom and grab back all that fat? Why, there wasn't a place in the world they *could* go to, after gettin' the tip from their tail that he was up the Albany Post Road, above Ossining, but to go right up there and not only grab Tom—but hand a little lesson to his partner that cut in on them.

"Didn't they talk back on the wraith wire, with the relay man at the other end, after pickin' up Tom, when he was off guard? Didn't Eddie hear 'em? And the minute he tried to beat it outa there, without waitin' to resplice, didn't Maloney himself whang him with a jack? If it hadn't been for them papers he'd stuck in his cap Eddie wouldn't wiz for us no more."

Bill leaned over toward Eddie.

"Neither Jake nor me has heard about that message," said he. "What was it all about?"

Eddie repeated the context, giving the two calls and the reply, as well as his own conclusions as to how it had been done, in spite of the fact that the current on the wire below the bent receiver was too weak to carry Morse.

"That BUN and FSN stuff—what was that?" asked Bill.

"The call for the men on the wraith wire. BUN was the relay man, I thought at first, but it may have been a call for Bob Hunter. Hunter's Atlantic City joint might be a relay station from the south, you know, for both Pimlico and Cuba."

"It must have been," said Chappie Hare, "because they wouldn't talk over their wraith wire with a mere relay man about getting nicked, would they?"

"I don't see why they would," said the Wiz. "But it's the FSN part of it I can't make out. FSN might be the bank-roll guy that was in the One Hundred and Sixteenth Street poolroom where Tom made his bet on Methuselah. We got to find Tom."

"That's the purpose of the conference," said Chappie Hare, "to find Tom — and where that wraith wire runs into the syndicate's distributin' station to the various poolrooms. They never expected anybody would find the wire, anyhow.

"We wouldn't have done it, either, but for the Wiz here. By the way, Eddie, excuse me: I plumb overlooked a certain matter. Maloney rolled you for everything —didn't he?"

"You said it, Chappie, all but one thing! Whenever I'm out on expeditions like this I carry that little thing in my shoe."

Eddie reached down, pulled out a gleaming object, and flashed it. There was a chorus of laughter despite the tension of unfavorable "breaks" in their affairs as the Wiz continued.

"If Maloney had seen that he'd have beat that paper under my cap into its original pulp—he'd been so tickled at himself. I'll get that pockmarked gent in a pocket of my own some sweet day—I hope so, anyway."

Bill leaned over the table again.

"That FSN sign—it might mean something, hey?"

"It sure might," asseverated the Wiz, "but if it does, what of it, Bill? We can't follow that wraith wire south of that telephone receiver, because, as I told Chappie, that wire does an Annette Kellerman dive into a hundred conduits once it strikes the Bronx; and from there on it goes to wherever it goes which is the place Chappie wants to find."

"I get you," said Bill somberly. "But if FSN stands for somebody, and we knew who that somebody was we might locate him, and he might lead us to where that wraith wire ends, mightn't he?"

"That sounds plausible," said Chappie Hare. "Bill, have you got any idea on who it might be?"

"Yep! I got an idea. But it might be the wrong idea. And even if it was, I don't know as I could say where that party hangs out."

Once more the tension rose in the little circle as Chappie spoke:

"Well, we'll see. Who do you think it is, Bill?"

"I think it's the name of the guy with the bank-roll—the same feller Jake saw drivin' the car. If he *is* the same guy, we could kill two birds with one brick—get hold of Tom again, and, mebbe, with a little luck, get to where the wraith wire—"

The raucous whir of the buzzer cut short the sentence. The push-button was, as they all knew, down-stairs on the outer door.

Chappie Hare's hand hung motionless over the table, whence he had extended it to pass the Wiz one of the sixteen bills which he had received in the cornfield.

There was an utter silence.

Chappie Hare's hangout was not a place known to many people—for reasons that actuated many of that gentleman's activities. Usually visitors came there only by appointment, and Chappie was rather select in his callers.

The summons was repeated, this time more insistently.

The host stepped lightly into the hall and down the one flight of stairs to the door. As stated, Chappie took chances always and accepted hazards when necessary.

There seemed to be no alternative other than to open the hall door below, although he had not the remotest idea who his caller might be; and visions of uncertainty flitted through his mind as he did so.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPPIE RESOLVES TO "RIDE WRAITH."

HAD it been the original wraith on the wire who confronted him, Chappie Hare could not have been more completely taken aback. The moment he discerned the caller, he almost concluded that the smiling figure facing him was a ghost!

"For the love of Mike!" he gasped as he saw the absent member of the wire-tapping coterie—Tom

The reply convinced Chappie that it was

no wraith that faced him, no matter how many other intangible and non-discoverable elements entered into the game he was playing.

"Got anything to eat? I'm as hollow as Mammoth Cave."

Chappie beckoned him in as Tom again asked:

"Where's the rest of our bunch?"

"Holding a mental post-mortem on you up-stairs," replied Chappie, leading the way into his apartment and announcing:

"Here's our lost sheep."

There was a chorus of delighted greeting, and Chappie seized his cheese-grater, asking:

"Where you been, Tom?"

"Well, I ain't exactly been to church, although I was listening to a sermon."

"A sermon?" echoed the Wiz

"The preacher didn't wear his collar buttoned behind," continued Tom, evidently enjoying the perplexity of the group, "but he did wear a yaller rock that made my eyes dim and mouth water every time I looked at him."

"We thought you had gone for good," said Jake, "and was just trying to figure out where our relief expedition ought to go."

"He was a jewel of a preacher," grinned Tom, "and he made me repent the evil of my mixing up with Chappie Hare's outfit—until I got home again. Boys, that fellow could give Billy Sunday cards, spades, and big casino!

"You oughta seen me hittin' the sawdust trail when he got through with me—down the Concourse. I give up all I had to his collection, every centavo that I won on Methuselah."

Briefly he explained his experience; the announcement that he was "under arrest," and then the arguments used to dissuade him from keeping the money.

"He had me foul," said Tom, "in one way, when he said he could bottle me up for violating the penal law by tappin' a news wire with John Doe, Richard Roe, and others unknown.

"It is a news wire, you know, although it carries racing news. Rather than go into some pogie and wait for you to spring me, I slid him the rind off Methuselah."

"You can tell the world that was the thing to do," said Chappie. "They did a little tappin' of their own—rapped the Wiz with a lead bag. I guess they think we're off'n 'em now. Anything else?"

"Oh, one little thing. But it 'll keep until I bury this Welsh rabbit in my cave. Welsh rabbits oughta go good with wraiths, Chappie, for you're a bigger wiz with cheese than Eddie is with watts. I'll have some grand little ghosts about an hour from now on the foot of my bed."

"Some day I'll make a better one than that," said Chappie Hare, "after I dig out what's in the top of my head. That's the grandest unexplored cheese mine on Manhattan Island to-night.

"I told the boys I oughta took them bills from you when we was together. We'd been in something, if I had, and had that wraith-on-the-wire outfit doin' a pinwheel instead of us."

"Well," said Tom, "it is tough to milk a cow and then fall down hill with the white suds. But you got a few bills left, ain't you?"

"Oh, I guess I got enough to buy a few bloomers to pull on to-morrow, but I won't have any too many, judgin' by the bloomers I pulled off to-day. Besides, all you boys know we didn't go into this job just for these pickin's. We went into it to pull off my grand idea and fix all of us for life, didn't we?"

The vote was unanimous that they had.

"I don't like to welch," went on Chappie, "not even with this wraith on the wire But, while I had one chance in mebbe a hundred thousand to pull off my grand idea, after what's happened I guess I'll have to take to cookin' Welsh rabbits to make an honest living.

"We can't repeat with that mob on that stuff again—not once in a thousand years. Now, Tom, you said you had something else to spill. Let's have it!"

Tom pushed back his plate and finished his coffee before replying.

"It ain't much, but it may give you a line on the preacher," said he. "When I handed him all the bones of poor old Methuselah, I got a flash at a big wallet he put the kale inside of.

"There was one of these celluloid protectors over a card under one flap of that wallet. And what do you think that card was?"

Chappie, to whom Tom was speaking, shook his head.

"A police pass," said Tom, "not the kind reporters or movie-men or probation officers or city employees get. One of the rich-and rare kind that only go to people who're right signed personally by Commissioner Wainwright."

A tense, horrid silence fell over them like a shroud on a corpse as Tom added:

"I couldn't get the name, but I did mugg the number. It's 190, stamped with red ink in the upper left-hand corner."

"No wonder he gave you back your liberty!" sneered the Wiz, after a ghastly pause. "I guess it's a regular ghost we're up against hey?"

Chappie Hare's face was a study. His black brows arched over blacker eyes; his thin nostrils quivered as if in sympathy with his emotions, which were too deep for any language to portray

Then his firm chin closed like a steel trap, his teeth clicked, and he said:

"You go to bed, boys! I've got to go out for a while."

"What for?" asked Jake.

Chappie Hare's eyes gleamed.

"I'm going to ride this wraith on the wire to wherever he lands — to-morrow. Never mind how or why. But I'm goin' to ride him, and ride him to win! See you in the morning."

Before they could recover speech Chappie Hare was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPPIE SLIPS "FSN" THE "RASPBERRY."

THE desk sergeant in the —th precinct was busy adding up an apparently endless column of figures regarding the whereabouts and habits of a large number of people whom the new anti-loafing law was designed to transform into law-abiding and industrious citizens; the lieutenant on duty was giving special instructions to an outgoing patrolman about abating a nuisance caused by a candy-stand which violated the city ordinances on his beat, and Captain Hannover, in command of the precinct, had just gone into his office on the other side of the big room, into which all offenders under arrest were brought to be "booked," when two patrolmen in plain clothes came in with a prisoner.

He was a rotund individual, well dressed, and wore an enormous diamond, whose yellow rays scintillated through the room like a search-light to proclaim that he had arrived. At his heels was Chappie Hare, who came in, taking off his hat as the prisoner faced the desk

"Name!" snapped the lieutenant, reaching for his pen.

"Henry Feldstein."

"Residence?"

The prisoner gave a number not far from the cross street and Avenue A, where Chappie Hare had first met up with Mr. Mike Maloney.

"What's the charge?" asked the lieutenant to the officers.

"We were told to bring him in, sir, this morning. I believe this gentleman has a complaint to make."

He waved toward Chappie Hare.

The other officer was rumaging through the captive's pockets. He drew out a large wallet, started to open it, saw something under the first flap, and, instead of examining it further, passed it to the lieutenant on the desk with a rather bewildered air.

The lieutenant scrutinized it. Then:

"Wait a minute. Ask Captain Hannover to please step this way!"

One of the men who had brought in the prisoner went across the room, rapped on the closed door, entered when bidden, saluting smartly. The prisoner leered at Chappie Hare as the precinct commander came out.

"What's this?" he asked crisply.

The lieutenant handed him the wallet. He gave one glance at the card under the celluloid flap and turned around to glare at Chappie Hare.

"Did you make a complaint against this gentleman?" asked Captain Hannover.

"Yes, sir. He robbed a friend of mine last night of a lotta money."

"What's your name?"

"Chester Hare."

"Where do you live?"

Chappie gave the number of his flat in Harlem.

"What do you do for a living?" demanded the captain.

Chappie shuffled uneasily.

"I'm a broker, sir."

Captain Hannover regarded him dubiously.

"How old are you?" he queried after a pause.

"Twenty-seven, sir."

"Where's your registration card?"

Chappie Hare gave every evidence of having entered a state of existence where he realized he had pulled "another bloomer." He had no card with him.

The rest of the proceeding was rather swift and also extremely unexpected by either the desk sergeant or the lieutenant. Mr. Feldstein offered bail in any amount—cash. It was refused. Mr. Feldstein received the apologies of the department—and left the room.

So did Chappie Hare.

They left in opposite directions. Mr. Feldstein stepped back into the street, Chappie Hare, between a guard of honor of the two men who had brought in the man with the diamond, disappearing simultaneously toward that region sometimes known in station-houses as "down-stairs."

Mr. Feldstein took a long breath and looked around. The street in front of the station-house was not very congested, although it was nearing high-noon. One or two unkempt children, a white-wings with his brush poking at the pavement, a grocery cart—and then a lone taxi idling past.

The alert chauffeur, catching the gleam of the search-light which Mr. Feldstein wore, looked over expectantly. Mr. Feldstein looked back toward the station-house. It might have been a morgue for any sign of life. He gestured toward the cab, entered, gave a direction, and was whirled away.

Mr. Feldstein kept peering behind until the street corner was negotiated. No one followed. After several détours he gave a new order, the chauffeur bowed, whirled the taxi, and "lammed" for down-town at a very illegal rate of speed.

At the first traffic officer the vehicle was halted. From the window flashed a hand—disclosing a wallet-flap with a card under the celluloid. The officer stiffened, saluted, and waved Mr. Feldstein on.

At the precise moment that Mr. Feldstein was lighting a Havana cigar of unusual girth and length, and perusing the list of entries for the day's racing at the same city, Chappie Hare, who had started out that morning with a rather oblique theory, was sitting in a cell whose chief wraiths were smells

His keen nostrils quivered, and his straight, black brows arched themselves over blacker eyes.

He was still sitting there when the taxi conveying Mr. Feldstein, threading the devious and narrow streets below Park Row, turned east on Cedar, and kept on and on and on—although, at intervals, the engine seemed to be missing badly.

Two blocks further on, Mr. Feldstein signaled for a halt. He gave the driver of the vehicle a handsome gratuity, if the low bow he received was any indication, and started ahead on foot. The driver turned his machine around, wheezing and barking, crawled slowly to the other curb, stopped and set his brake.

He lifted the hood and examined the spark-plugs. Then he tried to start the engine again. It balked. The chauffeur whipped off his coat, raised the cushion, brought out tools, threw the cushion under the machine, crawled on top of it, and began to make various attempts to locate and remedy the faulty motor in a most unusual way.

Which is to say, the driver banged hard on the muffler with a hammer, while through the space between the rear wheels not occupied by the axles, his keen eyes followed the fat figure of Mr. Feldstein until it disappeared in the last house at the foot of Cedar Street.

Giving the muffler another bang, the chauffeur crawled out, replaced things as they should be, threw down the "choker" leading to his gas intake, thus reducing the richness of the mixture to the right pro-

portions, cranked the engine without throwing the switch to get out the gas which had congested the cylinders—set his spark and gas, cranked again and sped away.

Straight up-town he sauntered, whistling gaily.

At Madison Square he pulled up to the curb as another man beckoned. The other man was Chappie Hare, and the chauffeur was Eddie the Wiz.

"Did he bite?" asked Chappie.

"I don't know," said Eddie. After explaining where the bank-roll man had gone, the Wiz added:

"But I can find out—easy."

"How, Eddie?"

"The wraith-on-the-wire," grinned Eddie. "If the wraith is down in that section—which I'd never dreamed in all my young life—I can get him, and get him right."

Bill, Tom, and Jake came over at this juncture.

"Well, that was a hot one," said Bill. "To think that FSN that had us all gummed up last night was Feldstein. Now, where do we go from here?"

"To the garage," said Chappie Hare, "and then Eddie and me have got to do a little plannin'. Boys, we'll ride this wraith on the wire to the finish under the wire—no matter how many hoosegows I get into. Are you with me?"

They were—to a man.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPPIE RIDES WRAITH UNDER THE WIRE.

RIDING a wraith, as Chappie Hare had averred he would do in spite of anything or everybody, until he rode it under the wire, was a proceeding that involved another curious move on the part of the leader and his faithful quartette.

They entered the garage in the taxicab, with the Wiz driving, and with Chappie, Tom, Bill, and Jake inside. In half an hour they emerged from the same garage. The taxi was now a moving van almost as large and unwieldy as a freight-car. Tom was driving. He was as disreputable as any roughneck furniture-smasher that ever piloted a despoiled home away on wheels.

With Tom on the seat rode Jake, wearing a leather apron, a cap much too large, with the visor over one ear and a smooch of dirt diagonally across his face, completely disguising him.

Out of sight in the van were Chappie Hare and Bill.

Eddie the Wiz was not in evidence at all, among the hodgepodge of bedding, boxes, and furniture which projected out of the end of the van in spite of its huge size.

The vehicle steadily rumbled down-town until near the foot of Cedar Street on the East Side, where the Wiz had watched Feldstein disappear in the last house.

Jolting and grinding along, little conversation was possible, but, when near the same locality, Bill gave vent to his stored-up thoughts.

"We started out like stake-horses yesterday, Chappie, playin' that wraith on the wire; but right now I'm busy bustin' bald-headed bed-bugs to keep 'em from runnin' steeple-chase events up my legs."

"This whole expedition may look like a hang-over from a Welsh-rabbit barbecue," said Chappie, "but, we'll be livin' the life of Riley after we ride that wraith under the wire—and we're in the stretch right now."

At this instant the ropes holding the stuff crammed in the rear of the van gave way. A box fell into the street, with assorted other household furnishings. Chappie reached the pavement next instant, yelling "Whoa!" to Tom, who brought up, squeaking.

Chappie Hare, tugging at the box, tripped over a plate in the pavement. It was a round affair, and seemed to incense him. He pushed it aside to get a better hold on the box, as the van backed slowly, to enable him to reload it.

Bill and the others quickly replaced the balance of the articles strewn in the highway, after Chappie loaded on the box alone. He replaced the offending bit of circular iron, climbed in and drove away.

They rumbled to the next block, stopped, surrendered the vehicle to a knot of wait-

ing men after stripping themselves of their *camouflage*, and once more, in the habiliments they had worn as gentlemen wire-tappers pursuing the most elusive problem of Chappie Hare's checkered career, followed their chief back to the Marks Building on the corner of Cedar.

Here they went to an upper room and sat down.

"How long we got to wait?" asked Jake.

Chappie consulted his watch.

"They ought to be at the post at Havana for the second right now," said he. "Gee! Yesterday at this time I was over in North Bergen, with my old college chum, that looks a little less like Ed Logan than he does like the fillin' for a meatless sandwich. Only yesterday! And Wraith was comin' over the wire—"

The telephone at his elbow on a desk rang sharply.

Chappie Hare took it down.

"Hello! Who's this? Wraith No. 2.? O. K. Yep. We're at the paddock. All set to go under the wire, eh? All right. We'll make a Garrison finish with that ghost."

He hung up.

"Come on, boys," said Chappie Hare.

They rose. From the adjoining room, whose door Chappie opened, poured another knot of well set-up, athletic fellows, each with a look of eager expectancy.

"Half of yous," directed Chappie, "go around the back way and come over the wall of the last house on the north side of Cedar Street. We'll go in the front way.

"You can't miss it—lots of old-fashioned flowers in the garden behind. When you hear the row in front, close in!"

Ten minutes afterward two patrol-wagons brimming with bluecoats came clanging down Cedar Street and paused at the door of the little yard leading up to an old-fashioned residence. The "harness bulls" promptly checked the avid crowds who had scented the "raid" like vultures and were swooping down from all sides.

Prisoners filtered out from the house—well-dressed chaps to the number of sixteen, and replaced the uniformed police officers who had ridden down in the "hurry-up wagons." These clanged away and did not pause until they had reached Centre Street.

In the hurly-burly no one noticed a manhole cover displaced in the centre of the street at the intersection of the block with another street; nor the emergence therefrom of a youth who bore divers and sundry instruments, including pliers, a soldering torch, short-lengths of wire, and all the paraphernalia of the conventional "trouble-shooter."

The Wiz looked down the street and smiled.

Then he vanished around the corner—flitting away with no more sound than the wraith he had been pursuing with Chappie Hare and his merry men. He had a clear field.

Meanwhile, Chappie and Tom and Bill and Jake, after a perfunctory survey of sixteen switchboards, each hooked up in modern fashion to the "wraith-wire," sought avidly for something else.

"Anybody see a fat gink with a yellow diamond?" bawled Chappie, "or a pock-marked guy wearing gray clothes and patent shoes?"

One of the men who had come over the wall from the rear came forward a little timorously.

"I did," said he, "but he flashed a pass—No. 190—signed by the commissioner, and I let him go with his friend. He said they were 'inside men.'"

"Can you beat that?" said Chappie Hare to Bill. "Now, I know I've got to invest some bills in new bloomers. I sure pulled a peach that time. Forgot all about that piece of cardboard.

"Well, Tom, tell the hatchet-fiends to get busy. We'll go back up-town. Eddie will be there by now, I guess."

They did not pause until they were at Chappie's flat in Harlem.

Eddie, as predicted, was sitting in the doorway.

In silence they all filtered into the flat. Chappie threw himself into a chair.

"Rather fat wraith," said Eddie, "wasn't he?"

"Sixteen boards all hooked up to that Morse-telephone trunk," said Chappie, "and anywhere from four to twenty out-

lets on each board plugged in to the pool-rooms. The North Bergen wire was dead. Hundred and Sixteenth was live, though.

"Well, I feel almost as old as that phony winner of Tom's yesterday—after not finding Mr. Feldstein nor my friend, Mr. Maloney. It just goes to show how foolish a man can be when he forgets what he ought to do."

"Don't worry," said Bill. "That joint will look like wrecked Belgium by now. Besides, you done a very neat bit of work when you slipped Feldstein the raspberry this morning by lettin' him think he was slippin' you something.

"When Captain Hannover come back in his office where Jake and I were waitin', he liked to had a fit, he laughed so hard. And when Mr. FSN climbed into Eddie's bus, we had to use the station pulmotor on Hannover to bring him round again."

"Aw, give a little of the credit where it belongs. Didn't Eddie start phony engine trouble so's he could crawl under and pipe off where he went? And didn't you, Bill, come acrost with that idea about grabbin' the van, and Jake suggest a bottomless box to let the Wiz into that man-hole for a test, without their look-outs gettin' hep?

"They had look-outs all along that block and they didn't see a thing. How was it down there, Eddie—hot?"

"The Havana track woulda felt like a refrigerator. But, it was like tippin' over a baby buggy to get that trunk wraith—one solitary lead into their cellar—and all them cables comin' out again. I heard Verbena, Rob Roy, and a lotta dogs goin' to the post in the second at Havana. Then I know, by that ghost Morse, that we'd nailed that ghost in our box at last.

"So, I let 'em work, while I listened in on No. 4 wire in the cable. You ought to heard that chatter. Sixteen men, all yellin' at once in one room is some noise. Then I cooned it along the conduit back to the manhole and picked up the trunk to the Marks Building, and got you through the switchboard. By the time I got all respliced and back to the top of the manhole, it looked like the Philadelphia Centennial down in that joint."

Chappie Hare nodded and reached for a telephone. He called a number, leaned back in his chair and began speaking:

"Give me the acting chief inspector's office, please. Lieutenant Chester Hare speaking. Inspector? This is Lieutenant Hare. I beg to report that in company with Detective-Sergeants Thomas Wycliffe, William Hendon, Jacob Werner, and Patrolman Edward O'Malley, I have located and destroyed the central distribution bureau for the news service received by the Feldstein-Hunter syndicate in an old house on Cedar Street. Yes, sir. We raided it. Sixteen boards. We destroyed the apparatus. Last location made by Officer O'Malley from conduit on Cedar Street. Sixteen prisoners taken to Centre Street. I will prepare formal report and have it on your desk to-morrow morning. *What's that, sir?*"

Eddie the Wiz thought his superior officer had suddenly met all the wraiths in the world, judging from his pallor. The black brows over blacker eyes stood out on a face that went red and white by turns.

But his teeth clicked and his lean jaw set as he replied casually:

"Very well, sir. I'll look into that matter at once and report the moment I have anything definite."

He sat down the phone.

"Bill," said Lieutenant Chester Hare, "bring me that big iron spoon hangin' up over my sink out there, will you? And, Eddie, will you do a little borin' in my right ear? Meanwhile, I'll lay Jake or Tom twenty-five to one that you get full-fledged Welsh rabbits the first dig into my dome. There ain't nothin' there but bloomers where I oughta have brains. Can you beat it?"

He paused and looked around

"The inspector's got men of his own in several pool-room joints in town, he says. Two in the same crib where Tom played Methuselah yesterday. One come out to phone him just after our prisoners got to Centre Street; so he told that man to go back, get his partner, and lay off—as we'd busted the flywheel on the main stem

"This man comes back and reports: '*Business goin' on just the same!*' They're gettin' odds, info, results! I don't mind

admittin' I felt somethin' like nine hundred and sixty-nine years old, myself, for a minute!"

CHAPTER XIII.

LIEUT. HARE "LAYS THE LAST GHOST."

LIEUTENANT CHESTER HARE'S last remark was not without some slight justification. When the relentless warfare on pool-rooms, involving the newer strategy which Commissioner Wainright and District-Attorney Dawn had determined on was duly put into motion, it filtered down the usual channels—to eventually reach Lieutenant Hare.

Hare had a good record. He was known to be incorruptible, persevering, brave, but not rash, and extremely versatile. More than that, he had the rare faculty of making men working under him feel that they were not under, at all, but with him, all the way.

Lieutenant Hare, therefore, was given practically *carte blanche* as to methods and men. He studied the game carefully. The result must be twofold—evidence that would convict the Feldstein-Hunter Syndicate of using news wires to carry information necessary for gambling purposes, and evidence that this news was actually so used for pool-rooms where the actual bets were made.

"The other way," said the acting chief inspector who selected Lieutenant Hare, "we're only cutting off the arms of the octupus. If the department didn't have anything more to do than raid pool-rooms, we'd be fairly active. But we have altogether too many duties to waste energy cutting off one arm of this octopus and have another ready to be cut off that's grown overnight.

"All I want is results. You choose the methods."

With such "marching orders" Lieutenant Hare had a free hand. The tenor of the acting chief inspector's commands showed that the department was in deadly earnest in thus assigning him to this "special detail."

There was no red-tape to hamper—no politicians to conciliate—just the path of straight, plain, unswerving duty—and results.

Having located the wraith on the wire, Hare still had to get down bets to show, conclusively, that this wire was used to serve pool-rooms. He had failed on the Havana entry named Wraith, owing to the unexpected race which that "hunch horse" had run on his "first out" of the season; but Detective-Sergeant Thomas Wycliffe's bet in the One-Hundred-and-Sixteenth-Street pool-room on Methuselah, although it brought entirely unforeseen and unavoidable complications into Lieutenant Hare's plans, still held the gem of "legal evidence beyond a reasonable doubt," because Patrolman Edward O'Malley had sent that "phony winner" over the wraith news wire.

The discovery, however, that Henry Feldstein carried a pass which signified that he held practically the commissioner's honor in his keeping, was a terrible blow. Not only to Lieutenant Hare, but to his aids. He had picked them, himself, and although they did not discuss this untoward symptom of the racing cancer which has corrupted so many public officials in all manner of offices for many years, they felt, none the less, that they were up against "a brace game."

Lieutenant Hare's rugged honesty, however, reassured him. The commissioner was "on the square."

How that pass had been obtained did not concern Hare; he had been ordered to get "results," and he used this fresh misfortune in a manner that proved his ingenuity.

It was simple for him to find who held No. 190. That made it simple to have the man apprehended. The bit of police comedy between himself and Captain Hannover, in the station house, was also carefully plotted in advance; O'Malley's appearance on a taxi at the psychological moment when Mr. Feldstein had emerged from the station was also Hare's idea; and the Wiz justified the nickname he had earned in electrical work of a confidential police character by his own shrewd methods of "mugging" Mr. Feldstein in the

very act of going into the Cedar Street house, where the incriminating "wraith on the wire" led, and the no-less incriminating distribution cables emerged.

The shock to Hare, therefore, was no less because he chose to attribute it to his own habit of self flagellation regarding mistakes in police business.

It fairly knocked him off his pins.

Then, as a man in the ring who has been put down for the count of seven, slowly rises while the referee tolls off "eight—nine—" Lieutenant Hare came back, a little groggy, as yet, but with the indomitable resolution which had made him what he was in the department.

"The harder you fall the higher you bounce," said he as the sparkle came back into his eyes. "Boys, let's figger a minute. I'm satisfied there ain't any other wire than that one where the Wiz found the wraith that carries the racin' news into Manhattan.

"I'm satisfied that it was the main stem we banged into, because both Feldstein and Maloney made a getaway over the back fence with that pass, when we rushed the joint. Now, if that is so, it shows they didn't have another joint between where that telephone receiver is still bending over the sounder up at Ossining, don't it, boys?"

"That's good dope," said Detective-Sergeant William Hendon.

"I'm workin' this thing out like an elephant testin' a shaky bridge," smiled Lieutenant Hare. "Now, what next? It looks to me, especially since Feldstein didn't see me this afternoon and still thinks I'm up in a cell at Captain Hannover's station house, as if they don't really know who's after them.

"They didn't see Eddie—he was down in the conduit. They didn't see Bill or Tom or Jake, because they went over that back fence so quick. Besides, having found Tom so easy on that Methuselah fat, they didn't figure him for a police officer at all; and, after Maloney cracked Eddie on the conk, why, they think we was all just a bunch of burglars—tryin' to grab off some soft mazuma.

"That's where we outguessed 'em—and they don't know it yet, because if they figured we were headquarters dicks, they'd naturally think we'd crab that wraith wire up above town. It don't make any difference that it's in Westchester County—they probably phone back results to some Yonkers joint, the same as they do to the Bronx.

"So they think the raid down in Cedar Street was due to the department, while they figger us for just burglars, as I said. Am I right, or am I not?"

The Wiz replied:

"They used the word 'goofer' on that kick back last night, just after they picked up Tom. Maloney bumped my egg so hard, in spite of that info helmet I had on, that I was pretty thick, for a while. But, lucky for me, I had my tin in my shoe—remember?"

"That was a good play," said Lieutenant Hare, "or else Maloney would have combed your hair with that lead-bag of his until you'd waltzed right over into the morgue. Maloney hates a cop's shadow. But we'll look after his post-mortem when we find him.

"Now, if I ain't spilled a bale of bloomers in what I just figured, what would be the next thing Feldstein would do? He's got a big play he's hogged all the boobs for the Feldstein-Hunter Syndicate. Blow high or blow low, he's got to hold that sucker play—for he must have an awful nut, with wires, runners, rents, and the rest of it.

"And that brings me to bright idea No. 99,999. If he figgered to hold the play, on top of that raid we just made, he must have figured out some way to hold it, *before we made that raid*—or he couldn't be doin' 'business as usual,' as the inspector just told me he was."

There was a chorus of assent. When it died away Lieutenant Hare went on, inexorably:

"Now where is he doin' it from? That wraith-wire don't run all over town. They only had a little juice on it—it couldn't serve very many feeders—now could it, Eddie?"

"You said something, Chappie," Eddie answered.

"Then the two ginks that claimed to be 'inside men' when they flashed pass No. 190, are still inside men—only they ain't inside of Centre Street, where the other sixteen phone-operators are, at present, on an open charge.

"There's only one place on Manhattan Island where they can be, and that's inside of the only place we're sure that the only wraith-wire on Manhattan Island runs into. I move we take a little excursion, boys, down to Cedar Street, and give that joint the 'up-and-down' just to pass the time away. They ain't run off the fifth at Havana, yet, and when I think of all that fat they took away from Tom, why, it makes my feet itch to get a bit of it back."

Lieutenant Hare and his four aids scanned the interior of the room where the wreckage of a costly telephone outfit in switchboards and other equipment was strewn.

The boards occupied all except a small space.

The walls had not been papered for years and flakes of pink calcimine had fallen away from the old-fashioned ceiling. The very atmosphere seemed funereal, there was not a sound.

The "harness bull" who paced the pavement outside the iron picket fence in front was the only man who could be spared, for the inroads of war had taken many men from the department, and the police business of the greatest city in the world had certainly not diminished—it had increased.

The outlook was not especially promising for the shrewd deductions which Lieutenant Hare had made, with mathematical exactness, while in the Harlem apartment he had selected as a rendezvous while engaged in this extremely difficult bit of detective work.

Not even a wraith of a telegraphic tick could be discerned

As for the chorus of telephonic information, like to that which had greeted them when "busting in" an hour and a half before, there was not even a ghost of that. At that previous epochal moment, Lieutenant Hare and the other raiders whom he had foregathered in the upper room of the Marks Building at the head of Cedar Street, had been greeted with an uproarious clamor, caused by the simultaneous voices of sixteen men, chanting in unison the name of the horse being phoned, the official number, the jockey, the weight carried, and other technical details — all of which the frequenters of poolrooms see posted before they attempt to "pick their dog"

This room was so silent that it reminded Lieutenant Hare of the poem, Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," for good literature and Welsh rabbits each held their place in his private life.

He was thinking hard.

On the next few minutes pivoted not only his own future in the department, but the future of the men who had so loyally stood by him in what had seemed from the first an almost superhuman task for them to do.

Then Lieutenant Hare signaled to the Wiz, who stepped over to his side.

"You respliced, as usual, of course, when down in the conduit, didn't you, Eddie?"

"I sure did. Why?"

"Oh, it just struck me that mebbe I'd pulled another bloomer. If you did resplice, why, there wasn't a thing to keep them from getting the information—holy cats! I've got it!"

Lieutenant Hare's straight black brows arched themselves slowly over his blacker eyes.

"Don't you see, boys," he whispered, as Tom and Bill and Jake crowded close, "that we overlooked one bet when we busted in here before? We took sixteen men up to Centre Street — one for each board.

"They was all yellin' at once. But, they was all sendin'-out *telephone operators*—and the stuff that came over the wraith-wire was *Morse*.

"Where was that other guy—the one that read what came over the wraith-wire and then give it to them? He must be *in here, somewhere,* for he wasn't grabbed, was he?"

The sheer simplicity of the reasoning struck them like a blow from Mr. Mike Maloney's little "lead-bag" between the eyes. The effect on them was absolutely stunning.

"He must be in here," iterated Lieutenant Hare, "because that wraith wire runs in here, and Eddie left it in good order. Now, don't you see? He's got a coop somewhere in here, where he sits and then translates from Morse into phone-chatter —and that coop is sound-proof, because we can't hear him.

"He may be talkin', for all we know, over another telephone circuit to another distributing station - but that little item don't count. The minit we grab him, busi ness won't be going on at the poolrooms— not as usual.

"Now, you boys scatter outside around the joint; Eddie, you stay right here and get your jack ready, so if he comes out this way -"

"We might wait and grab him when he comes out after the sixth at Havana—or the seventh, if they've got that big a card," said Jake.

"No, business is not goin' on as usual— not if I can help it," said Lieutenant Hare grimly. "That's what hurts, boys; my big idea had one chance in as many telephone wires as run into or through Manhattan

"I thought I'd put it over and I only blowed off another of my rotten bloomers. I'm goin' to git that guy. Wait a minute!"

He sprang lightly to one of the demolished switchboards — the one nearest the small wall space unoccupied and looked down behind the wreckage. The various cables leading into the costly apparatus had been ruthlessly chopped clear through by the "hatchet-brigade" which "cleans up" after raids on poolrooms.

Plainly there was nothing to be seen there.

Above was only the antiquated ceiling, moribund with age, decayed by the corroding foot of time, with spots of pink calcimine peeling like blisters from the plaster.

Around the top of the wall, just above where the border of roses on the wall-paper should meet the ceiling, ran a bit of molding.

The molding to the snapping, black eyes of Lieutenant Hare, seemed strangely new and utterly inappropriate for any such room, especially when it could serve no purpose. It could not hold together the sagging wall-paper, nor could it prevent the pink calcimine blisters.

"But it could," flashed his now fermenting brain, "conceal a wire—a wraith wire —and let's see if it does."

Suiting the action to his unspoken thoughts, Lieutenant Hare thrust his fingers over the molding at the spot nearest to him and felt for the expected wire, the wire that carried the wraith-Morse, which carried the inside information without which no poolroom could exist on Manhattan.

The result was fairly incredible to the investigator.

Not from the first mystical moment, when, with their "backs to the wall" of the Hudson River, the five men had doggedly kept battling on their quest for the most elusive and slippery of all possible criminals, until this astonishing denouement, had anything occurred which quite equaled what next happened, in pure unexpectedness.

The groping fingers of Lieutenant Hare found no wraith-wire—nor even the ghost of a wraith-wire. Instead, however, the funereal stillness was shattered by a mighty chant of voices:

"*Gunman, 1352, 115, Miller—*"

Then:

"*Flash for the fifth at Havana—*"

For an instant Lieutenant Hare could not comprehent what had occurred, for he was still looking upward, not downward. Then, as the molding separated into two parts and moved, in a small section corresponding to the space between the wrecked switchboards, outward, in the arc of a circle, Lieutenant Hare, looking downward, discerned a strange thing, *as the rest of the wall also swung outward into the vacant space.*

Mr. Mike Maloney, an "inside man," standing at the same instant with "his

back to the wall," although in somewhat a different sense than that which Hare and his men had stood when discovering the wraith above Ossining, fell backward into the opening thus created, and in such a position that his back was toward one Patrolman Edward O'Malley, alias Eddie the Wiz.

Mr. O'Malley, being new in his official character, save as to blue uniform, happened to be holding, at that moment, part of the regulation equipment which patrolmen of New York are required to carry—a serviceable little toy, which, in the parlance of Mr. Maloney's friends, is known as a "lead-bag."

In some strange manner this little toy came into violent contact with a portion of Mr. Maloney's "conk" and, sad to relate, Mr. Maloney, not being engaged in chasing an elusive wraith on the wire, was without any protecting info' on his head, such as Eddie the Wiz had happened to be wearing a few hours previously when he had met Mr. Maloney quite unexpectedly for the first time, a few miles distant from where he now met him again, almost more unexpectedly.

Mr. Maloney suddenly lost all interest in the subsequent proceedings.

Lieutenant Hare, having noted with an amused smile that the wall which had slid back at his touch of a concealed lever in the molding resembled the thickness of a modern refrigerating-plant door, stepped down and into the place where the other "inside man" was still wearing a yellow diamond whose rays almost scorched the face of the man whom Mr. Feldstein had left safely that very forenoon in a station house.

Mr. Feldstein looked as if the wraith on the wire had suddenly climbed off that extremely serviceable but, withal, ghostly circuit of fantom Morse; and had come to life in a manner as weird as the same phenomenon had first perplexed the man now facing him.

Mr. Feldstein, also, being discreet, suddenly endeavored to pull down all the loose air above his head using both hands in the endeavor.

When the procession at last emerged to the "hurry-up" vehicles provided for just such contingencies, the patrolman on the beat in front of the house gave every evidence of having suddenly been calcimined around his face.

"Yes," said Lieutenant Hare, who sensed the officer's fright, "they're real ghosts, but they won't do business as usual on the sixth race at Havana, to-day. Eddie O'Malley is in there, yellin' his lungs into sixteen fine switchboards, all to once, sendin' a lotta phony winners that 'll knock the poolroom bank-rolls all over this island stiffer than he knocked a gunman whose head he's standin' on, right now. Go right in and have a look at him. He's a wizard!"

He whirled Mr. Feldstein around by the shoulder.

"You're a twin, ain't you?"

Mr. Feldstein admitted the soft impeachment.

"You got a brother around on Avenue A that makes cloaks, ain't you?" asked Lieutenant Hare.

Mr. Feldstein meekly admitted it, and that his brother was named Edwin, while his own name was Edward. Hare, who was examining a bit of cardboard with a crimson "No. 190" under a transparent celluloid protector in a big wallet otherwise well lined with "fat," nodded.

"I thought so, this morning," said he, "when you flashed this on Captain Hannover and mooched out of his house. You stole this p s which your twin brother, a respectable business man, received from the commissioner of police as a special mark of his personal appreciation — ain't that so?"

Mr. Feldstein, cowering under the blaze of a pair of blacker eyes than the black brows above them, hastened to admit this, too.

Lieutenant Hare drew a long breath in relief.

"Then," said he to himself, "the last ghost is laid that ever rode down that wire."

Aloud he said

"Get into the wagon!"

(The end.)

OLD TIMES ON THE GEORGIA PACIFIC.

Now Part of the Great Southern Railway System, the Old Road Is Almost Forgotten, but in Its Day It Was a Hummer.

BUILT AND OPERATED BY "HOME PEOPLE."

Became Part of Richmond and Danville, Which Was Absorbed by Southern —Garner, Both Division Super and Freight Agent, Was Going to Fire Himself—Easy Traveling for Boomers in Old Days —Op's Experience with Escaped Convict.

BY "J. E. M."

Author of "Old Times on the Hannibal and St. Joe," "Railway Tails That Wag the Dogs," "Some Poets of the Morse Shops," "Old Times on the El Paso Southwestern," "Old Times on the Billy Oh," etc.

ONE of the best-known old-time railroads, whose name has been swallowed up and whose very individuality has been lost in that of a much greater system, but one which in its day was a power in the country through which it passed—a country rich in cotton; rich in minerals, and rich in coal—was the old Georgia Pacific, running from Atlanta, Georgia, straight west to the banks of the Mississippi River at Greenville, Mississippi.

This old road is now nothing but a division of the great Southern Railway System, but in its day it was a railroad to be proud of, and almost every one of its employees, from trackwalker to general manager, were proud to say that they worked for the old Georgia Pacific.

The road was approximately five hundred miles in length—perhaps a few miles more or less, but five hundred is close enough and was perfectly independent, serving a country that was peculiarly its own. So, too, were the people. It was a "home" road, if you know what that is—a railroad which did not go outside of its own immediate territory for its employees. The men came from the towns and countryside through which the road passed. They learned railroading right at home

Almost every employee had been born and brought up along the right-of-way, and every one who lived near the tracks knew every engineer, fireman, conductor, and brakeman on the road, and called them by their first names.

Georgia Pacific a Family Road.

This happy condition was well illustrated by an incident that came under my observation at the little village of Cordova, Alabama, many years ago. I was standing on the platform waiting for a train to carry—or "tote," as they call it there—me to Birmingham. I had already been "fixed" by the telegrapher

There was a group of old settlers gossiping near me. Each one carried either an immense tin bucket that resembled nothing so much as a diminutive wash-boiler, or a large, covered willow-basket.

"I reckon as how the one thirty-three is right-smart late," remarked one.

"Naw! Jim, in thar, jist told me that she were only fifteen minutes behind," replied another.

Jim was the telegrapher agent.

"Well, I do wish she'd hurry along," volunteered an old lady who had joined the group. "This here fried chicken will be cold, and my Tommie don't like cold chicken."

"Nor my Bill, neither," spoke up another.

"The same with my Lige," said another.

I sidled up to the group and, addressing the old gentleman who had first spoken, asked him to whom they all referred.

"Why, son," he said, with a twinkle in his eye, "we-all is the daddies and mammies o' this here one thirty-three train crew. Yeh see, my son, Robert E. Lee Tolliver, he's the engineer; this lady's son, Thomas J. Jackson Southwick, he's the fireman; that old man's son, Jefferson Davis Spraggins, is the conductor; that man's son, Beauregard Titsworth, is the head brakeman, and that other man's son, Jubal Early Hollingshead, is the hind brakeman."

"Yassah, yassah," interrupted an old colored man who was standing a little apart from the main group, holding a mammoth covered basket in one hand and a large tin covered bucket in the other, "an' my son, George Washington Alexander Hamilton Stephens—he's de rube, he is."

Freight Crews Lived High.

Right here it must be explained that each freight-train carried in addition to its regular crew a negro rube, who performed the menial labor, such as sweeping out and keeping the caboose clean; making up the bunks and cooking the meals for the crew when they were away from their homes.

Upon this occasion the one thirty-three was manned by the sons of the people of Cordova, and their parents—including the father of the rube, who spoke as though the title rube were not inferior to that of general manager of the road, than which there could be none greater—had turned out *en masse* to greet their offspring and to load them down with delicately browned fried chicken, corn pone and other specimens of the culinary art for which the South was and is famous.

This was no rare occurrence. The same kind of gatherings might have been seen at almost any of the smaller stations along the entire road from Atlanta to Greenville—the country from which the Georgia Pacific drew its men. And, believe me, the men were loyal to the company and gave to it the best there was in them

"Home People" Owned Pike.

At its eastern end, Atlanta, Georgia, the direct connection for the North and East was the old Richmond and Danville Railroad, now, like the Georgia Pacific itself, part and parcel of the Southern Railway. At Birmingham, about one hundred and fifty miles west, connection was made with the Louisville and Nashville for New Orleans and other Southern points, and with the Queen and Crescent route for Meridian and Vicksburg, Mississippi, on the west and also for Chattanooga and Cincinnati on the north.

At West Point, Mississippi, the Illinois Central was crossed; and at Greenville, the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad, then an independent road, too, but now controlled by the Illinois Central, was tapped.

There were, of course, many other connections. But these were the principal ones and served to give the Georgia Pacific excellent traffic arrangements.

The stock of the road was owned mostly by home people. In fact, the road was built by home people, and it remained in their hands until, little by little, it was taken up—a few shares here and a few shares there—and almost before they became aware of it the home people had lost their railroad and it had passed into the hands of strangers. Then the Georgia Pacific ceased to exist except as the Georgia Pacific Division of the Richmond and Danville. Its headquarters, which had been at Atlanta, were consolidated with those of the latter road, which had been removed from Richmond, Virginia, to Washington.

The first general manager of whom I

have any recollection—although there had been one or two before him, perhaps more—was Mr. W. W. Ryder, who, when the Georgia Pacific was absorbed by the Richmond and Danville, was retained as general superintendent of the Georgia Pacific Division of that road. His headquarters were moved from Atlanta to Birmingham, Alabama.

The two division superintendents of the Georgia Pacific were located at Birmingham, although the general offices, as stated above, were in Atlanta. These gentlemen were Mr. Charles Ross, who was the head of the Eastern Division, from Atlanta to Birmingham, and Mr. Charles H. Garner, who was in charge of the Western Division, running from Birmingham to Greenville.

In addition to being superintendent of the Western Division Mr. Garner was the freight agent at Birmingham. That would be a rather strange arrangement to-day—combining the positions of local freight agent and division superintendent!

It is told of Mr. Garner that whenever anything went wrong with the local freight department at Birmingham he would sit in his superintendent's office, opposite the old and famous Caldwell House, and dictate some very sarcastic letters to himself as local freight agent, calling himself down in a manner in which he was a past grand master.

Then, going to his local freight agent's office the next day he would dictate his replies to himself as division superintendent, using the same choice sarcasm that had distinguished the epistle to himself as local freight agent from himself as division superintendent

Garner Discharged Himself.

It is said that upon one occasion, when the affairs of the local freight office and local freight house did not suit him, owing to the negligence of his chief clerk and the foremen in the freight sheds, Mr. Garner wrote a vitriolic communication to himself as local freight agent, in which he referred to himself as a "prize boob" and declared that he should have been born with long ears that he could wag, as he had no more sense than the long suffering but stubborn animal that possesses these lengthy organs. In closing he gently but firmly insinuated that his—Garner's—services were no longer required.

This remarkable communication he despatched to his office in the freight-house, by a special messenger. Then he dictated a letter to General Manager Ryder, in which, in scathing terms, he denounced the local freight agent at Birmingham as a bone-headed freak that didn't know the difference between a bale of cotton and a bale of hay, and wound up with the assertion that he had "fired him bodily" and that he could never work for him again so long as he—Garner—was a superintendent on the Georgia Pacific.

Superintendent vs. Local Freight Agent.

Then he hied himself to his local freight office, where he found his letter announcing his dismissal awaiting him. He immediately dictated a letter to himself as division superintendent, deploring the hasty action which that official had taken and asking for just one more chance, pleading a large and growing family and the privations that they would endure should his source of revenue be cut off at that particular time.

This letter was duly received by himself, and he took it under advisement, with the result that he enclosed the plea, together with his own recommendation, that Local Freight Agent Garner be reinstated, to General Manager Ryder.

That gentleman immediately told him to use his own judgment as to the reinstatement and requested Superintendent Garner not to bother him again with these minor details on his division, or he would be forced to dispense with the services of both Superintendent Garner and Local Freight Agent Garner. I never heard of Mr. Garner making any further complaints about himself to the general manager, although he continued to annoy himself with letters to himself upon any occasion when he could pick a flaw in the manner in which the local freight-house and office was conducted.

This was Mr. Garner's only "bug," as the boys termed it, for he was a fine railroad man of the old school, and was a favorite alike with officials and employees.

He was a native of Alabama, being raised on a farm not a long distance from Birmingham, and going to the Georgia Pacific when it was first built. He started as a brakeman, was promoted to conductor, resigned to fire an engine and then became an engineer, from which position he was promoted to division superintendent.

Walked Right Into—Himself!

It was told me that the reason that the position of local freight agent at Birmingham was combined with that of division superintendent was that Mr. Garner was naturally of a sarcastic turn, but was, withal, very tender-hearted, and did not wish to vent his spleen upon any one under him. So he had himself appointed local freight agent so that he could use himself as a bumping block whenever he felt irritated.

Quite a scheme, what?

The chief train despatcher at the time of which I write was Mr. Benjamin Prentice Ketchum, another product of the soil of the South, hailing originally from Tallapoosa, Georgia, where he learned the gentle art of telegraphy. He later became a station agent, going from that position to the train despatcher's office.

B. P. K. was a good fellow, and the boys all liked him. He remained with the Georgia Pacific for some years after it was swallowed up by the Richmond and Danville, and for a short time after that road was, in turn, absorbed by the present Southern Railway System.

The last time I heard of him he was a division superintendent, I believe, somewhere for the Atlantic Coast Line—or perhaps it was the Seaboard Air Line—I am not certain which. He was very well known throughout the South for his square dealing with the men under him.

Assisting Mr. Ketchum as despatchers were John ("Old King") Brady, late of the Pere Marquette at Croswell, Michigan; Charles Hopkins, later connected in some capacity with the Southern Pacific's traffic department; Thomas J. O'Brien, who died some years ago while acting as superintendent of the Arkansas and Louisiana Midland Railway; "Jack" Huddleston, of whom I have spoken in another article as having filled various positions of trust and responsibility, such as superintendent of transportation for the Fort Worth and Rio Grande Railroad, now a part of the Frisco Lines; passenger conductor on the Louisiana Railway and Navigation Company, *et cetera*; "Harry" Bugg, Huddleston's "side kick" and Charlie Gray, whom I have lost track of.

Besides these, in the telegraph office were employed such well-known operators as Harry Pugh, afterward one of the Associated Press's star operators, located at Atlanta on the *Constitution*, and later transferred to the Louisville, Kentucky, *Courier Journal*, where he remained up to 1907. Since then I have not heard of him except in a casual manner as having left the service and engaging in business for himself.

George Hodges, or "Bill Nye" Hodges, as some of the Georgia Pacific boys called him, because of his fund of dry humor, was also copy-operator in the Birmingham despatcher's office. George went to California some years ago, I believe, to conduct a fruit ranch. How he succeeded I have not heard, but if the soil which he cultivated was as rich as his humor he could not help but succeed.

My first experience with the Georgia Pacific and the men employed thereon dates away back to about 1880. I know I was something of a "kid," but I had already fallen a victim to the *Wanderlust*, and was cutting my eye-teeth as a "boomer" operator. And what I did not know—or what I thought I did not know—about the telegraph or traveling game was not worth knowing!

When "J. E. M." was a Kid.

You must bear in mind that traveling in those days was a very easy matter. All that was necessary was that you have an old pass or a letter or two, showing that you were a railroad man. On most roads that carried you as far as you wished to go. The old Georgia Pacific, however, was something of an exception. Like all old-time Southern institutions, they "had to be shown," but once "shown" they could not do enough for the traveler.

I was in Memphis when I was seized with a sudden and uncontrollable desire to go South. I got my other shirt and other collar from the laundry that evening, and at about nine o'clock presented myself before the second-trick despatcher of the Illinois Central, at the old Main Street Depot, and asked him what the chances were for a ride. By the way, this despatcher chanced to be Mr. Tom Mahoney, later superintendent of the Texas and Pacific, at New Orleans.

Easy Traveling.

Tom asked me where I wished to go, and I told him that it didn't make any material difference, so long as it was in a general southerly direction. I desired once again to bask in the warm sun of the South—the real South, and not the South as represented by Memphis, Tennessee. He told me all right, to come around at ten thirty, when there was a passenger-train going in my direction. He said that there was no doubt but that he could "square me" with the conductor.

This he did, and I rode all that night, stretched over two seats in the smoker. About five the next morning I awoke and looked out of the window.

The town looked good to me. A fairly respectable-looking depot on one side, and on the other a typical old-fashioned Southern hotel, with wide, cool-looking porches surrounding it on three sides and a nice flower-garden in front. My stomach was empty, and I concluded that I'd hop off and investigate.

I dismounted and found, according to the sign on the station, that I was in Grenada, Mississippi. While I was looking about my train pulled out. That didn't bother me a little bit, though, for I saw, coming toward me, a young man who trundled after him a truck-load of baggage. Also, I observed down the platform another truck-load ready to be moved. Without saying a word I harnessed myself to this second truck and trundled it after the first one

I knew that I was dealing with the night operator, baggage-master, *et cetera*, and he was the man I was looking for. There was nothing in the world more likely to endear one to the night operator, who also had to hustle four or five tons of baggage, than to help him out, which I did without a word being exchanged.

There was another train standing on the other side of the depot, which I found was the main line, and these two mountains of baggage, consisting of sample trunks and theatrical baggage mostly, had to be transferred to the baggage-car of this train. I assisted the "OS" man in this, and after the train had pulled out, he turned to me with a grin and said:

"Reckon you-all is an operator! Huh?"

I reckoned with him that I was, and he invited me to go into the office with him. Here he introduced himself as Jim Sprague, and he gave me a cigar, which I smoked with some reluctance. Then he said, casual like:

"I reckon you-all is hungry. Huh?"

I reckoned that I was, and he told me to go with him.

"You see," he said as he closed and locked the door of the ticket-telegraph office, "it's this way. Mam is sick, an' pap is ailin', an' I have to get my own grub, or I'd ask you to my own home to breakfast. But you-all can understand, cain't you?"

He looked at me rather pleadingly, I thought, in excuse for this seeming lack of Southern hospitality. I told him that I understood thoroughly, and I felt sorry for him, for he seemed to be such a good, generous soul.

Real Southern Hospitality.

Then he took me across to the old-fashioned hotel that stood opposite the depot and introduced me to the proprietor, just as though I had been a life-long friend:

"Tom, shake hands with my very dear friend, 'J. E. M.,'" he said. "He just came in on No. 7. Please see that he gets the best you have, sah."

"Glad to meet you, sah," replied Tom," shaking my hand cordially. "Any friend o' Jim's here is a friend o' mine, sah. Yonder is the wash room, sah. Perform your ablutions an' breakfast will be ready in a jiffy."

Then Sprague, after shaking my hand cordially, told me that he would come down after breakfast and arrange for my journey farther south.

Soon breakfast was ready, and such a breakfast! Home-cured ham in generous slices, fresh eggs from the hotel yard, new honey, strawberries and cream, and hot biscuits! Where but in the country districts of the South can one obtain such fare?"

Caboose Entertainment of the Best

About eight o'clock Sprague returned, and as there was a local freight at the station he " fixed " me with the " captain " for a ride as far as I cared to go on his train, which in this case was Winona, Mississippi, only about twenty-five or thirty miles farther south, where the Illinois Central crossed the Georgia Pacific. I concluded that the latter road was my meat for the time being.

I unloaded at this point in due season, and found but little to interest me there except the comparatively easy problem of a ride east. This was not so easy as I had anticipated, however, for the first train that came along was a " fast " freight, the conductor of which, after looking me over, declined to tote me, and the next train was a local freight.

The operator at Winona spoke to the conductor for me, and the conductor, whose name was Mann—Billy Mann—hesitated for a moment or two and then decided that he would take a chance. After leaving Winona Mr. Mann summoned the rube and bade that " rascal " to prepare " the gentleman " the " best you have, or I'll skin you alive." The rube displayed two glittering rows of ivory and proceeded to comply with the order. I was soon filled to repletion.

Mr. Mann was not misnamed. He was a man in every meaning of the word. He not only toted me, but he fed me while toting, which is much more than many of the Northern " captains " would have done. At Columbus, Mississippi, which was the end of his run, he insisted that I go to his home with him and spend the night and have breakfast.

I was used like an old and honored friend while under his roof, and the next morning he took me to the telegraph office and introduced me to the operator then on duty, who called up Mr. Ketchum at Birmingham and told him that he had a good telegrapher on tap, if he could use him. Mr. Ketchum could, and immediately sent me a telegraph pass from Columbus to Birmingham, where I arrived that same night about eleven o'clock, with a full stomach, three dollars in my jeans and a charitable feeling toward the world and all those in it.

I immediately wended my way to the general offices at the top of the hill, opposite the old Caldwell House. In the despatcher's office I found on duty Jack Hud dleston and Harry Bugg, working the second trick. I introduced myself and was given a royal welcome. I remained in the office with these two old timers until they were relieved at twelve o'clock, when we all three adjourned to a restaurant, where we sat until nearly daylight.

When I saw Mr. Ketchum he immedi ately sent me to North Birmingham to work nights. The depot, if such it might be called, was a box car set aside on a temporary spur—and talk about lonesome places! Oh, gee!

North Birmingham was not then what it is now. There was only one house in sight beside the negro quarters of the Sloss Iron and Steel plant—and it was about a quarter of a mile away. It was a farmhouse set down in the center of a four-acre patch which was planted in melons and corn. There I obtained board.

Board for ten dollars per month, with a room thrown in. What do you know about that? Good old fashioned board, too. Chickens and home grown garden " sass "!

There was not much to do at " N B," for such was the call, but I stuck it out for three or four months. Then, after an experience that I will never forget, I decided to resign, and when I tell you why, gentle reader, I do not think that you will blame me in the least.

About six or seven miles west of North Birmingham was located a convict camp. The station was called Coalburg—it is still there if you desire to look at the map and hunt it up.

In the vicinity were several coal-mines, to the owners of which the State of Alabama leased quite a number of her convicts, the majority of whom, of course, were negroes, and desperate ones, too, believe me.

One night—it was very warm, I remember, for I had both the car doors open, one on either side, to permit what little breeze was stirring to pass through—after the last passenger-train had gone I made up a bed for myself between the doors, preparatory to enjoying two or three hours of much needed rest. I had been gadding about Birmingham almost all day, hobnobbing with Brady, Huddleston, and Bugg, and I was tired. I had just got into a pleasant doze when I was rudely awakened by some one shaking me violently.

Op's Hair-Raising Experience.

"Have you seen anything of him? Have you seen anything of him?" was shouted into my uncomprehending ears.

"Seen who? Seen what?" I managed to say.

"Negro. Escaped convict," replied one who appeared to be the leader of some crowd.

Then I saw what I had not at first observed that there were seven or eight of them, all with revolvers in their belts and Winchesters in their hands.

"No, I haven't seen anything of any escaped convict around here," I replied, "and I reckon that if one had been about here I surely would have seen him, as I've been right here since seven o'clock."

It was then about eleven.

"Well, he ain't here, that's a cinch," said the leader. "Come on, boys, let's go down to the quarters and the furnace. That's where we'll find him."

And off they rushed, like a pack of human bloodhounds, intent upon their prey. Still somewhat dazed, and scarcely half awake, I sat down in the doorway to collect my thoughts and watched the posse run rapidly down the track in the direction of the red-painted negro quarters.

They were scarcely out of sight, and I was about to lie down again for another snooze, and had half arisen for that purpose, when a firm hand clutched my shoulder from behind and forced me back again, while a voice tense with earnestness said:

"Be quiet, white man, an' you-all won't git hurt. But let one yap out of you and I'll brain you-all like I would a bug! Now git up an' shed them-there clothes you have on, an' do it quick, too. You-all hear me?"

Convict Made a Good Job of It.

Hear him! Goodness! Hear him! His voice was not loud, but there was no mistaking its earnestness, and when I slowly turned my head and beheld a negro standing behind me with a piece of iron, probably three feet in length, poised directly over my head, I knew that the only thing for "J. E. M." to do was to peel off his clothes and to do it instanter.

I did so, even to the shoes and stockings, the negro meanwhile standing by and donning the clothes as I shed them. Then he backed me to a closet where we had formerly kept our stationery and other supplies, and crowded me into it in no very gentle manner, after tying my hands behind my back, and stuffing my mouth full of the yellow tissue paper that we made the water copies of the way-bills on, thus completely gagging me. He closed and locked the door, and I could hear him descend the four or five steps that led from the tracks outside to the box car telegraph-office station. Then in less than a minute, I heard him return. He opened the door of the closet, and something struck me. That was the last I knew for some time. When I came to myself it was to hear some one remark:

Brass-Pounder Had Near Squeak.

"That was a mighty near squeak for the kid. He's coming around all right now, though."

I opened my eyes to find the posse that had waited on me—I had no idea how long ago—standing around me, while the leader was bathing my throbbing head with cool water. The negro was seated on a bench, securely shackled, and wearing a sardonic smile, and my clothes. They told me afterward that he was making directly toward the "quarters," where he had some friends,

and ran straight into the arms of the posse, who recognized him immediately, despite his change from the zebra stripe to the clothing of citizenship. They also recognized my clothes; and, surmising that all was not right, had come direct to the station, where they found me crumpled up like a jack-knife and wedged in a corner of the stationery closet.

I was laid up in the hospital in Birmingham for two or three weeks after this experience and after recovering declined to go to "N. B." again nights. Do you blame me?

I relieved Harry Pugh as night copy-operator at Birmingham shortly after that, and was there when the Richmond and Danville obtained control of the Georgia Pacific.

The Richmond and Danville, for a very brief period, cut something of a swath in the railroad world, but its prominence did not last long. To use a homely expression, "It bit off more than it could chew" when it obtained control of the Central of Georgia, and immediately began to dismiss the veteran employees of that fine old road and started to Richmond and Danvilleize it.

But it was not for long, for the stockholders of the old Central of Georgia Railroad and Banking Company rose as one man and protested against the high-handedness of the Richmond and Danville, and the property reverted to its original owners, after a brief but bitter lawsuit.

The Richmond and Danville itself was but a mushroom concern, soon failing and reorganizing under the name of the Richmond and Danville Terminal Company, which, in about a year's time—perhaps less—passed into oblivion, to make way for the present great and powerful and successful Southern Railway System.

But who remembers the Georgia Pacific as it was in the good old days? Very few, I imagine. It was a good old road, and one which I am proud to say I worked for when both it and myself were in our prime.

TALK OF THE TALLOW-POT.

BY PAUL STEELE.

I HUMP my back till the muscles crack,
While the old hog reels and rolls;
The steam it trills for the Potsdam Bills
And their shriveled peanut souls:
While my map is fried and my tank inside
Beads clean through my dungaree,
You can bet the "Kink" who is on the blink
Sweats colder sweat than me!

I swing the scoop while the witch's whoop
And the old girl knifes the air;
With men and meals we're whizzin' the wheels
While the red-eyed headlights stare:
And when I'm done at the end of the run,
There's a scoundrel across the Rhine,
Who would give his hosts to be rid of ghosts—
And to sleep a sleep like mine!

THE TAMENESS OF WILD WALT.

BY LYDIA M. DUNHAM O'NEIL.

Engineer Wallace Was Laughed at for Playing It Safe, but There Came a Night When—

HE stood up straight like a soldier, and had the stride of a bronco-buster. His voice was big and hearty, his arms muscular, and the glint in his eyes was like starshine on a frosty rail.

He was the type that you associate with all kinds of daring feats and nervy deviltry, and that was the sort of fellow every one thought he was.

Within three months after he came to Coalport they called him Wild Walt because he was so tame

"When in doubt take the safest course," says the "Book of Rules"; and Wild Walt had evidently got it by heart.

He wasn't jumpy or excitable; he never got flustered; but in other respects he was like a man who had lost his nerve—if he had ever had any. All the little tricks of making time—close running, whistling in, and the like—were wholly lost on him.

If Wild Walt started ten minutes late he would pull in ten minutes late, and nothing could ever move him up.

Kidding him and taunting him did no good. As long as the company was satisfied with the way he ran his engine, he said, it wasn't any of our business

One of the fellows called him a big, soft coward to his face -and learned in an instant that Wild Walt's knuckles, at least, were hard.

The war came; and we began to figure how many of us came within military age. Wild Walt was one, and a few said the war would be the means of turning him from a big bear-cub into a man.

But Walt didn't enlist. The draft came; and Walt seemed relieved that he wasn't caught in it.

The bond issue came; and Wild Walt said he hadn't any money. Yet he was living quietly, not in the best of the boarding-houses, either; he had said that he wasn't married and had no folks; and, so far as we knew, he had no vices, either. And, having a regular run, he drew down good wages.

Now, wasn't he the last man you'd pick to fall in love with Bridget Hanrahan?

She was old John Hanrahan's daughter—old John who pulls the mail, 55 and 54; and anybody whoever knew him can imagine what a daughter of his would be like. Bridget—she was proud of her name and never let anybody call her "Bee," or anything like that—Bridget was all spirit and nerve, sparkling eyes, busy fingers, and twinkling feet.

If Wild Walt had been the man that he looked you couldn't have found a better matched pair.

But Bridget had gone with the Red Cross in 1915, been under fire a dozen times, been actually wounded twice, and hadn't come home till scarlet fever compelled her. And there was Wild Walt, who hadn't nerve enough to make up a quarter of an hour of lost time

Bridget knew that he was in love with her and despised him; old John knew it, and hated him. The rest of us knew it and scorned him.

But what's this I've got in my hand that came in the last mail an engraved announcement of the wedding of Wild Walt Wallace and Bridget Hanrahan?

No less; and this is how it came about

The troop-trains were rolling eastward in a steady stream, loaded to the doors with laughing lads in olive drab. Over on the

Valley Division there had been a tie-up, and all the westbound trains were late. To complicate matters a snowstorm was setting in.

Schedules were disarranged, as they had never been disarranged since the night of the big smash in the Dorsey yards. To cap it all, Tully, the best of the despatchers, had resigned to enlist; and Porter, though capable, lacked Tully's coolness and unfailing accuracy. He had never yet gone through a night when half of creation seemed all bugged up; he had not the experience which insures self-confidence.

The troop-trains were running on 54's schedule; two had gone through, and old John Hanrahan was pulling the third. And as fast as the weather and the meet-orders permitted, the passenger trains and manifest freights were swinging in from the Valley Division, where the mess, whatever it was, had been cleaned up, and the congestion relieved.

Porter, eyes bent over the train sheet, sat up suddenly. His face turned red, dark red; then, slowly, the color withdrew and left him pallid as a dead man.

He moistened his lips with his tongue.

"Where's Costello?" he asked.

The train-master, warming his hands at the radiator, looked up quickly. Porter's strained, unnatural voice told him that something was wrong.

"Costello? Why—here he is!"

Costello, chief despatcher, entered the room as he heard his name spoken, and crossed to Porter's side.

"What is it, Tom? Anything gone wrong?"

His eyes scanned the train-sheet rapidly. Then he gripped Porter's shoulder.

"Tom, tell me just what you've done! Am I reading it wrong?"

Porter shook his head.

"You're reading it right, I guess. Third 54 is coming against 97."

The train-master was at his side in an instant.

"Third 54!" he exclaimed. "Third 54! The troop-train! Tom, my boy is on third 54!"

"Yes," said Costello, "and a couple of hundred other boys. Get up, Tom!"

Porter vacated his chair and stood shivering behind Costello as the latter dropped into it.

"There's a chance," said Costello, "just the barest chance that Drummond is open—"

"Only a day-man there," reminded Porter.

"But a chance that he's there yet—"

Without a trace of nervousness, as quietly as if he were transmitting an order to pick up a car of automobile tires, Costello called Drummond.

"DM, DM, DM," he clicked steadily.

But there was no response. The day-man at Drummond had gone home hours ago.

"Hanrahan," said Costello at length, "is on third 54. He expects 97 to be in the clear for him at Drummond. And 97, without a meet-order, will meet Hanrahan—where?"

His eyes ran over the train-sheet again.

"In the cut, I make it—somewhere near the foot of the hill"

"In the cut," whispered the train-master, and breathed an oath that was almost a prayer. No. 97, loaded with horses from Kentucky and Virginia, bound west to a cavalry camp—beating down the hill upon third 54—on John Hanrahan, serene in the belief that his trainload of boys had right-of-way over all.

In the cut—in the storm—and a boy of his aboard! The train-master's face went gray.

"God knows, Givens!" whimpered Porter. "God knows I "

"Oh, I know!" snapped Givens. "But it's done! That's all that matters! It's done!"

"Wait!" said Costello. He was packing tobacco into his pipe and feeling for a match, but all the while his eyes were on the train-sheet.

"Wait! There's a string of freight on the siding at Coopersville. Let's see; yes, waiting for 101. Wallace is running—"

He touched the key again.

"Extra 27 west; Engineman Wallace; Conductor Rogers. No. 97 is proceeding west without orders against troop-train, third 54. Cut off engine and three cars and

follow in pursuit of 97 immediately—and with all possible speed."

"Wallace!" groaned Givens. "Wild Walt! Speed!"

"I know," said Costello gently, "it's a forlorn hope, Givens—but it's a chance, and the only one there is left."

He sent another message, directing suspension of all traffic between Coopersville and South Laurel, that the wreckers, if needed, might have a clear run from both directions. Then he turned to speak a hopeful word to Givens, and, aside, motioned Porter out of the room, where he followed presently.

"Tom, there's reason to fear the worst. Do what you can; Givens isn't fit to do anything. See that the wrecking crew is called; tell them to have steam up; get some doctors and nurses, too, if you can, for if 97 ever hits that troop-train they'll be needed!

"They can't see each other's headlights to-night in the cut of all places. Only, for Heaven's sake, don't call Bridget Hanrahan!"

He went back to the key. Givens was standing, cold and rigid, over the train-sheet, reading it over and over, like a book-keeper trying to discover why and where the figures before him fail to balance.

But however he read the records there, the sum was ever the same: 97 was beating down on the troop-train, and his boy was on third 54.

"Now I know how it feels to be wait ing for a U-boat!" he said thickly.

"Sit down!" said Costello, striving to maintain a level tone and to keep all hint of doubt, worry, or sympathy out of his voice.

"Sit down, Givens; Wallace will catch them!"

But in his heart he cursed the luck that placed Wallace out there to-night—Wallace, of all men—Wallace, with the body of a mighty mastiff and the soul of a spaniel!

"If he knew it was Hanrahan," he said aloud, in spite of himself, "why didn't I think to tell him? Maybe for Bridget—"

Givens shook his head.

"No, not for Bridget, nor for twenty Bridgets. It isn't in him, Costello!"

The snow was coming down furiously, and in the yards the switch-sweepers were busy with their brooms keeping the switches clear of the drifts. Their lanterns were mere flecks of light, half-seen only, and then only at intervals, through the thick curtain of night and storm.

Within ten minutes a little group had gathered around Costello, and there were others in the hall. The superintendent was clinging to the arm of the janitor; both had boys on the troop-train.

The roundhouse foreman called Costello to the telephone; the master-mechanic was there, he said, ready to go out with the wrecker; his nephew was on third 54, and had they heard anything yet?

Costello answered, "Nothing"; but his voice was a little shaky now.

There was a little commotion at the door and the chief despatcher turned. It was Bridget Hanrahan, with an old brown shawl pulled over her head and shoulders, her cheeks wet with the snow.

"Mr. Costello," she began, "my father —is he—"

"For Heaven's sake, Bridget, I told them not to call you!"

"I know. But I couldn't help knowing there was something wrong. My father—is he—did they—"

"There is no news yet," said Costello gently as he gave her his chair. "He is running against 97, but we hope Wallace will overtake 97 before they meet."

"Wallace! Oh, my God!"

She sat dry-eyed, nervously waiting. She had gone through the hell of war, and here, as there, the worst of it was the suspense. The lulls were more trying by far than the periods of action.

"Wallace!" she said again. "If it was only the other way—if father was in his place, and he was running 97, or the troop-train—"

But Wallace—where was he?

The order reached him at nine-fifteen, and he was thinking of Bridget Hanrahan.

An instant later it was as if Bridget Hanrahan had never existed. He did not know that her father was pulling third 54; he did not know that Costello was cursing his

spaniel soul; he only knew that his mastiff body was at last unleashed. There was 97 running against third 54; and there was an order from Costello to him:

"Go and get 'em!"

He pulled down his cap and pulled up his collar and climbed into the cab. The wind was whistling in the telegraph wires, the snow was drifting over the track, but Wild Walt's heart was singing.

He looked back. The head shack had cut off the three cars from the rest of the train and swung him a high-ball as he clambered aboard the engine. Rogers was already at Wallace's side

They pulled out onto the main, and the operator closed the switch behind them. In a moment the storm shut them out from his sight.

There was whirling snow ahead of them and whirling snow behind. It thickened around the headlight and blurred the narrow path of light upon the track.

It was a night such as would ordinarily have caused Wallace to creep along, feeling his way like a child in a darkened room; but to-night he was a mastiff unleashed.

The snow gathered thick on the pilot, and the gleam of the headlight grew ever dimmer as the snow pelted and plastered its face; but the 1066 spun zipping down the rails.

"This is as near as I'll ever get to running a tank!" shouted Wallace with a laugh. "All the thrills of war!"

Rogers wondered. What had come over Walt? Where had he got this daredevil spirit all in a moment?

He would not make twenty-five miles an hour on a clear day; yet now, in the night and storm, he must be doing full forty, possibly more.

There was a sensation, as if one side of the engine was lifted clear of the rails Rogers could not see it, but he felt it; he knew they were on a curve, too, and his heart went cold. He leaned forward

"Are you crazy?" he yelled. "This isn't the Hindenburg line we're hitting at!"

"Yes it is!" Wallace shouted back. "Soldiers on 54! This is a tank slamming at the Kaiser from the rear!"

Rogers was sure, then, that Wallace had gone crazy. Just why or how he didn't know, but only a crazy man would talk like that and run an engine like that through such a storm.

"You'll plow through 97's caboose!" he warned. "You'll kill us all!"

"Better us than the bunch on 54," roared Wild Walt. "But we won't!"

He had been figuring closely. With the start 97 had had, and the speed she was making, he could not possibly overtake her between Coopersville and Drummond. She would meet the troop-train in the cut, or a little way east of it; but if he—Wallace—made better than forty-five miles an hour, he had a good chance of overtaking 97 a mile, or perhaps two miles, east of the place where the trains would otherwise meet.

Costello, back in the despatching-room, had reached the same conclusion long before; and with pencil and paper he was figuring, from minute to minute, where third 54 was, where 97 was, and how far in pursuit Wallace might be.

Wallace, riding through the snow, kept the 1066 pounding at a furious rate. A light engine would have left the rails long ago; even with the weight of three loads behind them, there were moments of anxiety—to all but Wild Walt.

The old mill pitched and slung her weight from side to side, but Wallace was like a daring rider at a rodeo. He knew his mount, knew her capabilities and his own.

There was a dark hulk at the side of the track, and a switch-light blinking faintly upward Drummond, closed till six in the morning.

Wallace peered forward, downward. The headlight's narrow and ever-narrowing stream of light showed him, he thought, a space between the rails swept clean of snow by the current of air which whisked along in the wake of 97. He was gaining on her, and the decisive moment was approaching.

There was nothing to be heard but the shriek of the blizzard and the noise of his own engine, but a mile and a half farther on Wild Walt thought that he glimpsed a tiny point of light. He could hardly be sure; it was lost instantaneously in the swirling snow; but he eased off a little, slowing up very gradually.

He looked at his watch. He must be very close, he thought—and he *had* to be, if he was to avert disaster.

The banks of the cut walled them in; he could not see ahead, and he dared not run wild now; he could only feel his way, measuring skill and daring against fate.

Then, suddenly, there was a dark mass immediately ahead of them, and an impact more violent than he had intended — the splintering of wood and the crash of a caboose window; but caboose and engine were still safe on the rails and sliding forward.

Wallace was out across the slippery running-board in an instant—over onto the caboose. The rear platform was crushed, but he climbed across the splintered planks and entered the door to find the flagman still sprawling on the floor, and the conductor, with unsteady legs, demanding to know who in thunderation was bumping into Uncle Sam's "calvary" this time of night.

"Cut your air!" ordered Wild Walt "Quick, man! Never mind the bruises! Third 54 is coming against you!"

An instant the conductor stared at him; then hastened to cut the air.

The flagman hurried across the cars with his lantern; Wallace speedily returned to his own cab and set 1066's whistle screaming, loud and shrill and steady, until it outshrieked the wind that whipped wailing through the cut.

Long before 97's flagman had reached the engine his engineer heard Wallace's whistle, and, sensing the trouble, set his own whistle going, while the head brakeman ran forward with lantern, torpedo, and fusee.

Presently—the flagman had just reached the engine—there was a report; and third 54, with old John Hanrahan in the cab, shoved her nose through the gloom, her headlight plastered over, her green markers barely visible. And behind a sleepy bunch of boys in khaki, who, without knowing it, had come very near mixing with Uncle Sam's "calvary."

Old John Hanrahan's legs trembled as he heard the story.

"And who did all this?" he queried as the flagman told what little he knew. "Who was it that must have made forty to fifty miles an hour this night in this storm? Who was it? That's what I want to know!"

"Walt Wallace," answered the flagman. "He smashed into our caboose."

"Walt Wallace!" shouted Hanrahan. "Walt Wallace! The big stuffed sheep! What are you givin' me anyhow, or have you all gone crazy?"

But Walt himself, anxious to know how things were going, appeared on the scene at that moment.

"Well, for Heaven's sake, Hanrahan, is it *you* pulling 54?" he began. "If I'd known that I'd have squeezed another five per hour out of the old mill on the way down!"

Hanrahan took his gloved hands in his own

"Walt," he said fervently, "anything I've got in the world is yours — even Bridget! You can have Bridget if you want her!"

The crowd waited, tense, in the despatching-room. Costello looked at his watch.

"Whatever was to happen," he said, "has happened by this time. No. 54 is safe or she is in the ditch. We can only wait now. There is nothing we can do."

Minute after minute went by. At length it seemed hours later there came a call: "DS, DS!"

"I, I," answered Costello.

Bridget Hanrahan clutched her hand over her heart, as if to still its heavy beating.

"Third 54 off the track—" There was a moan from the crowd.

"—just west of Coopersville office. Hanrahan, Wallace, and crews working with frogs. Expect to proceed in twenty or thirty minutes."

An instant of silence was followed by a ringing cheer.

The troop-train was safe! No. 97 was safe! Everybody was safe!

Bridget Hanrahan knew a little of telegraphy, but not much. She laid her hand on Costello's arm.

"It's all right, Mr. Costello?"

"It's all right, Bridget, as well as I can make out. Wait—"

His finger tapped out a message. In a moment came the answer:

"Wallace caught 97 in the cut, west of DM. Whistled a warning; 97's engineer sent flag ahead, averted collision by about two minutes. No. 97's conductor and flagman very slightly bruised; caboose platform damaged. No. 97 backed into clear at DM. Tracks getting badly drifted. May need snow plow before morning."

"It's all right, Bridget; your father is safe, thanks to Wild Walt!"

The superintendent stepped forward.

"Costello! Order Wallace to come in with Hanrahan, if you please! He's done enough for one night, I think."

Hanrahan and Wallace came in together, and Hanrahan's arm was around Wallace's shoulder. A few of the crowd had gone home, but most of them waited for third 54 to pull in.

Wallace, unprepared for the crowd, thinking only that Costello wanted a full account of the affair, would have retreated; but Costello had him by the hand, and the train-master was telling him about his boy on third 54, and the janitor was telling him about *his* boy on third 54, and the superintendent was telling him about *his* boy on third 54, and the master-mechanic was telling him about his sister's boy on third 54, and Wallace was not sure whether they wanted to hang him for a German spy or decorate him for sinking a U-boat!

Bridget had run to her father, first of all; but now she turned to Walt, with her blue eyes shining.

"Walt," she said, "the only reason I've been shy of you was that I thought you were a—that you were not a brave man. But now I'll say that you're as good as the best, and that includes any that I've seen in Flanders.

"And, Walt—" Bridget was always a most unusual girl—"And, Walt, I'll marry you, any time you want me!"

Walt looked down at her a minute without speaking. Then he stooped and kissed her.

"Bridget," he said, "God knows I'm glad I brought your father back to you, if I can claim credit for it; but I can't marry you, Bridget—I couldn't ask you to marry me in a thousand years!"

She drew back surprised, hurt, maybe a little bit angry and ashamed. And just then the superintendent stepped forward

"Miss Hanrahan," he said, "and gentlemen, I think it is about time for me to say a few words concerning Wallace, since he won't say them himself."

"No," said Walt, "don't. It won't do anybody any good."

"But I'm going to say them. And if he tries to slip out, gentlemen, lock the door—handcuff him—tie him to the wall. Only don't hurt him!"

"Well, go ahead then," said Walt. "If you're set on it I'll have to face the music, that's all!"

"You call him Wild Walt," said the superintendent, without paying any attention to him, "because he is so tame. Out on the D. and R. G. they called him Wild Walt because he was so wild.

"If you went out there to-night and asked them if they knew Wild Walt, they would say, 'Ah, yes! He was one of those fellows who used to come whistling down Marshall Pass as if all tarnation was broke loose behind him! But he did it once too often!'

"He did it once too often, gentlemen, and he went into the ditch. He went into the hospital, too, for six months. When he came out the surgeons pointed to him with professional pride. And they had a right to, for they had made about half of him over

"He's good for as many years as I am, I'm sure—but even if Hindenburg's army landed in New Jersey, Walt would have to fight guerrilla fashion, if he wanted to fight at all. The army would never let him in.

"If that was all, Walt would be as wild to-day as he ever was; but his fireman went into the wreck with him, and came out with a broken back. But he lived. He's alive yet—and helpless.

"He has lived in a wheel chair for five years, and he'll be in it till he dies. That sobered Walt and tamed him, as nothing else on earth could ever have done!"

"Well, why in thunder didn't he say

something about it?" some one then demanded.

The superintendent turned his eyes upon the speaker—a young fellow who had fired for Walt until his promotion a few weeks before, and had chafed a thousand times at the excess caution which he had deemed mere cowardice. He was known as a fast runner already, and had begun to boast that he was going to be pulling one of the fast mails inside of a year.

"Why, how could he?" the superintendent answered gently. "Suppose you had put your train in the ditch, Henry, and put your fireman into a wheel-chair, and got yourself discharged, all through sheer daring and recklessness, do you think you would go around telling about it?

"It wasn't a pleasant thing to talk about, or even to think about; and I wouldn't speak of it now only for Bridget Hanrahan. I can't stand by and see two young lives spoiled for lack of a word of explanation.

"Suppose he had told you fellows merely that he had got into trouble once by fast running. There are some—there are always some—who wouldn't have been satisfied until they had dug up his past record—found out what sort of trouble, and where, and when? He might have lost his position—I'm not all-powerful here, you know!

"Walt has been averaging about one hundred and twenty dollars per month. He lives on forty of it, and the rest goes to the fireman in the wheel-chair. Walt's life is insured in his favor.

"That is why Walt has no money. That, Miss Hanrahan, is why he can't get married, much as he would like to

"The D. and R. G. was through with him, of course. He came here, and I found a place for him. I didn't ask him to promise me not to run wild again; I knew he'd hold himself in check.

"But to-night he got orders to let loose, and I gather that he did. It was like the old days on Marshall Pass, wasn't it, Walt?

"But, Miss Hanrahan and gentlemen, I'm not through yet. Late this afternoon I learned something that Walt doesn't know.

"Years ago—I was train-master then, and Walt was fireman a young friend of ours went wrong. Walt and I trusted him and made good for him. It cost us two thousand dollars, and the young fellow promised to pay it back, but never did.

"He gave us a mortgage on a twenty-acre tract of land in Kansas, and paid Walt five dollars and me ten, and that was the last we ever heard of him. We looked the land over, and, as Walt said, it was a beautiful place—for prairie dogs!

"A year ago people began to strike oil all around it. Last week they struck oil on our place—Walt's and mine. To-day I received a telegram saying that one of the wells on our place is the twelfth best in Kansas in point of production.

"Walt can give all his salary to the wheel-chair man now, and have plenty left to furnish a home and buy bonds, too.

"Now, Walt, will you marry Bridget Hanrahan in a thousand years?"

"No," said Walt, stooping to kiss her again, "to-morrow!"

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DON'T FORGET!

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A FIVE-PART STORY—PART TWO.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

ERIC SILVERSTEIN, a retiring and studious New Yorker of means, was the son of Leontieff, a Russian nobleman who had married a Jewish lady secretly Assuming the name of Silverstein she had gone to New York, while Leontieff had gone on an expedition to the far north, and never returned Eric's mother had told him stories of a mysterious ice-bound city called Rangarok, stories told her by her husband, which Eric repeated to his chum, Ralph Wiston

One night, in a Bowery museum, Eric saw a beautiful girl, strangely dressed, who, with her two servants—Knut, a giant, and Egbert, a dwarf—were being exhibited as freaks. Eric understood her speech, which was pure Anglo-Saxon, and rescued her and her servants. He placed them aboard a Norse long-boat, moored to a quiet East River pier. She told him that she was the Princess Editha, daughter of King Theobald, who ruled over the Anglian people of Rangarok under the Danish oppressor, King Harald Deerfoot, who had tried to force her to marry him To escape this fate and to seek aid for her people she had crossed the Atlantic in search of Vineland, the story of its discovery having come down through the ages to her Not understanding American customs, nor our language, she had been inveigled into the museum.

Eric determined to bring about the marriage of Editha and his ideal man, Ralph But when the day came she changed into a raging fury, and tried to kill him He escaped, and the long-boat sailed away Eric organized an expedition to find Rangarok, and took Ralph with him At a European port they picked up Bjorn, a Norwegian, who told them more legends of Rangarok

Far to the north Eric, Ralph, and Bjorn, while in a small boat, were deserted by the crew, who sailed away in the yacht Driven by a great storm through a narrow passage in the ice-pack they sighted land As they neared the shore the people ran away, but when they landed they were met by Asgeld, priest of Loki, and some Danish warriors.

CHAPTER VII.

TO KING HARALD'S CITY.

IT was the high priest of Loki, who, leaving the council of the gods, and Odin, his foster-brother, wandered into space, desolating and consuming with lightnings and volcanic fires.

He was best known among the Danes as the father of the Midgard serpent, which ever threatens the destruction of the world; and the emblem was carried by all the more predatory tribes.

I gaped at these splendid warriors as they strode beside their priest—giants, almost immortals, brandishing their flashing swords, while the sunlight shone like gold about their high, winged helmets.

They came up to us and took their places about us, while the high priest addressed me in the Danish tongue.

"I am Asgeld, Loki's priest," he said. "Three moons ago it was revealed to me in a dream that strangers were on their way to pierce the barrier of our realm.

"It has long been prophesied that the day shall come when we, who live now as Odin's warriors in Valhalla, feasting and slaughtering, shall pass away, through the coming of strangers.

"Wherefore Harald Deerfoot, our king, being much disturbed when this dream was announced to him, hath sent me hither to find you and bring you back.

"And lo, you are even as the dream showed! For one of you was fair as the sun, and handsome as an eagle, and the other small and dark and wizen, such as are scribbling bards, and merchants of the Byzantine lands, and others whom Odin's curse doth rest upon. And the third was strong, and like to our people."

He had my mark!

I glanced at Ralph and saw that, though he had not understood, he appreciated the admiring looks of the Norsemen.

And, indeed, though he stood only a

trifle over six feet. he was the handsomest man present, well-proportioned, and striking, even in his rough serge, which contrasted sadly with the panoply of the Norsemen.

And there my resolution that he should marry the Princess Editha took firmer root than ever. What an adventure for me!

I interpreted the priest's words to Wiston and then said that we would be glad to accompany him to the city of Harald, to tell the purpose of our coming.

"It is well, strangers," answered Asgeld. "So let these theows bring you cow's milk and bread, and when you have broken fast, litters shall be got ready to convey you, for it is a two days' journey over the mountains to the city of Rangarok."

The old man whom we had encountered in the hut had hung upon the priest's words like one trained to interpret the behests of a master, and now began addressing the populace, which did not seem to have understood the utterance, which was in Danish.

At once the people began to run hither and there, preparing a meal for us. A trestle-table was laid out, loaves of black bread, flat and only slightly leavened, placed on it, with rock salt. I saw the woman coming back along the seashore, leading the cow, and soon we were drinking warm milk out of clay pots, and making a hearty breakfast of bread, grilled fish, and honeycomb.

Meanwhile the litters were being prepared, fashioned simply of sacking, coarsely woven and slung from pliant boughs. When all was ready we lay down in these, and were lifted neck high, each by four men, impressed by the Danes for the service. And so we started.

The ascent proved laborious for our bearers, but at last the summit of the cliffs was reached.

The panorama that met our gaze was superbly magnificent. Range upon range of lofty mountains was disclosed, intersected by valleys in which dwarf timber grew, and some sort of grain—I thought a hardy barley—ripening quickly under the long days of sunshine.

There was, however, no sign of Rangarok—nothing but the rugged hills and the valleys, with their clustered cabins.

Looking seaward, I saw that the water extended a long way round the land, making the part on which we had disembarked almost a peninsula. Northeast, however, the uplands rolled away as far as the eye could see.

And wondering at the extraordinary mildness of the air, considering the latitude, which must have been that of southern Greenland, I got my clue when I saw open water north of the ice barrier.

I deduced that the ice was not formed in these waters, but was an extension of the Greenland ice-pack, forced eastward by the Gulf current, particularly in the period of summer, and that the channel through which we had entered was probably at the tip of the peninsula, where the southerly current, sweeping down, kept the pack from rounding it.

As the bearers halted at the summit, Ralph called to me from his litter. Hitherto we three had been kept well apart from one another, I do not know whether by design or accident; now, as he called and motioned to his bearers to bring our litters together, the priest looked back sharply, but made no gesture of interference.

"I want to get the hang of this thing, Eric," said Ralph. "Do you really maintain that these people are an original settlement of Danes, who have enslaved another original colony of Anglo-Saxons?"

"That's what I told you. It looks as if it were true, doesn't it?"

"It's too stupendous to believe easily," he answered. "I tell you, Eric, old chap, hitherto I've thought it was just one of your crazy notions. Do they have money?"

"I don't know. Money was, of course, known to them, but their transactions were usually made in kind. Why?"

"Good Heavens, Eric!" he burst out. "Suppose there's gold up here! Suppose we, with our civilized knowledge, have a chance of getting to be rulers—and getting away with something worth while!

"What a pity we haven't anything but our clothes—not even a revolver amongst us. You haven't?"

"No," I said, delighted that his en-

thusiasm was beginning to awaken. "But I fancy we'll find these ancestors of ours—of yours, anyway—very adaptable. And wait till you've seen Editha!"

He smiled and nodded at me, and lay back in his litter. We went on. When the ascent grew steep I wanted to get out and ease the backs of the slaves, but the Danes would not permit this, although they treated us with much respect.

We halted at intervals of about two hours, but the Danes were always eager to press on again, and showed no pity to the panting bearers, goading them on with the flat of their great swords against their thighs and legs.

It was about four in the afternoon, as I judge, when, reaching the summit of a high hill that had dominated the route of march all day, the litter-bearers sank down, panting, after depositing us on the ground. Standing up, I gave a sudden cry of delight at the spectacle before me.

Across a wide, wooded, and thickly settled country rose an almost precipitous peak. Low clouds hung over it, and seeming to pierce them, uprose the towers and pinnacles of the dream city of the sky.

It was Rangarok, the city of my childish dreams, the far, lost city of my secret aspirations!

Another Camelot, I might call it. For it seemed one with the bare and jagged rocks beneath it, columns and walls of granite, with Gothic groins and arches, turrets and citadels, and with the genius of Gothic building, it seemed to mount constantly, producing an optical illusion of upward movement, like one of those diagrams that one sees printed in puzzle sections of the magazines.

I cried out; and then I heard another cry. It came from Bjorn, who all through the day had lain back in his litter and spoken hardly a word. He was looking at Rangarok with open mouth and staring eyes.

"There are big deeds to be done there, my friend," he said, laying his hand on my shoulder. "Great adventures, strong hates, deep loves for him who has need of them."

"I have no need of them," I answered.

He smiled, but did not contradict me I looked back toward Ralph, and saw that he had not stirred.

"Ralph Wiston is the man for that," I continued. "Bjorn, did you ever make a hero of a man? And did you ever resolve that, being yourself devoid of all the qualities that make for manliness, you would live your adventures through him? Well, Ralph is my hero."

He smiled again, with a far-away look upon his face that I had seen on the boat, and turned away.

About a hundred yards from where we had rested was a small stockade, built of sharpened stakes driven deep into the ground, and erected in the form of a square. These were bound with withes and osiers, and had at one time been plastered, though the mud had fallen away. The whole was thatched, thus forming a sort of fort as well as a camping place

We entered through a gap just wide enough to admit a litter. Inside I saw evidences of recent occupation, probably by the same party on its way to the coast to seek us -if, indeed, the high priest's story were true.

There was a roughly shaped barrel, half buried in the ground, containing barley beer, there was meal in another, and under a covering of some dampened weeds, apparently compressed to hold them alight, were the still living embers of a fire.

The theows were now dismissed outside the stockade, with a few handfuls of meal apiece. The Danes flung off their helmets and armor, and began to stretch themselves upon the sacking with which the whole place was strewn.

While supper was in preparation Asgeld came toward me benignantly, and motioned to me to seat myself upon one of two little stools placed near the central fire.

"O stranger, have no fear, but feast and sleep well," he said, "and likewise your companions, for to-morrow shall see us at the gates of Rangarok

"And since, in three days' time, King Harald celebrates his nuptials with the Princess Editha, you shall doubtless be welcomed with much hospitality, for we Danes are ever eager to learn news of new peoples."

And so one question which had been trembling upon my tongue for long was never uttered.

"This Princess Editha is of your people?" I inquired.

"Nay, stranger, is it not known even in the Byzantine lands that it is not customary for our kings to wed among their subjects?" asked Asgeld incredulously. "And truly the nuptials would have been celebrated long ago, but for the witchcraft of Haggudra, the wise woman, which drove the princess forth from this realm, to wander in the Byzantine lands.

"Thence she has at last returned, to the great joy of Harald the king, and Theobald, her father, king of the Anglian people, and the wedding will be observed three days hence with incomparable splendor. And all the malice of the Trolls cannot undo this."

"The Troll folk hate her?" I inquired.

"Verily, stranger, lords though we be in this land, we have no magic equal to that of the Trolls, and their witch, Haggudra. And you must know that Haggudra hates King Theobald and the Princess Editha, for she longs to restore the old gods whom the Anglians have put down in favor of the White Christ.

"Now it is written in the treaty whereby the Anglians came under our protection that their faith should not be molested. And surely it matters nothing to us. Yet we are glad that Haggudra would restore our gods to Rangarok, for then doubtless the Anglians would forget their former freedom.

"The Anglians are the strangest of all peoples," he continued, stroking his white beard. "And I know, for I have penetrated far among the outer islands.

"Other races will fight, and when they are beaten, yield. But with the Anglians it is otherwise.

"It is not 'I yield—spare me!' or 'I fight till death!' as with other folk, but 'I yield if you agree that nine men may meet together in the street to debate upon all subjects,' and 'I yield, but I must have my god for worship, and nine measures of wheat must equal twelve of rye; also it shall be forbidden to drink ale between the hours of six and twelve on the day of the sun.'

"Verily, stranger, there is nothing to fear from the Trolls," he went on, "for though in olden days this stockade was built against them, they are now our good friends, and we are bound together by our common faith. Beware only of their magic; for in making that which is not seem that which is, they are cunning beyond all the world."

By now the meal was being consumed. Great tankards of foaming ale were filled from the cask, and barley cakes baked in the embers.

The Danes grew boisterous as they grew drunk. Rather sullen and somber during the day's march, they now gave way to their wilder impulses. Old chants arose, thrillingly familiar to me. Swords were displayed, and boasts uttered.

Even Bjorn seemed to catch that wild spirit which filled the little stockade with sound, and joined in the songs and shouting.

Then Ralph, who, too, had been drinking, sprang to his feet in uncontrollable excitement.

"I'll give you a song, fellows!" he cried; and the Danes seemed to catch his meaning, for there was a momentary hush, and Ralph yelled out the words of a well-remembered college drinking song, a simple refrain that might have been translated with hardly a change of more than a few syllables.

It brought the tears to my eyes to see these wild men hanging upon his words, catching the chorus and throwing it back to him. It was a privilege to sit back silent and watch him.

How much I owed him! What a friend he had been to me!

Presently the shouts and revelry began to die away as the roisterers stretched out their huge limbs in sleep beside the fire. Only the sentinel, standing sleepily in the entrance to the stockade, stirred.

I crouched under my sacking, still looking with all the kindly thoughts of friendship toward Ralph, not far away, and Bjorn, at my feet.

It was eery there, in the sharp night

wind, with the cry of a fox at times borne down the valley, and the undefinable noises from the hills.

CHAPTER VIII

KIDNAPED BY THE TROLLS.

I DON'T know if I slept, but I know that I awakened with a start and a sense of impending danger.

At first I thought it was the moonlight, which fell full on my face; for I am one of those nervous beings to whom moonlight means sleeplessness and apprehension. But it was not that; it was the sense of being watched.

I was lying close to the picket-fence, and all of a sudden, through the openings between the stakes, I saw a pair of bright little eyes peer into mine.

At first I thought that they were those of some beast of prey, and recoiled from the expected fangs. But a finger was laid across a lip; and then I realized that it was a little dwarf who was watching me—one of the Trolls.

He was a little fellow, hardly more than three feet tall, with a shrewd, cunning, and yet not unkindly look. He thrust his face quite close to the stakes, and assumed an expression of extraordinary and portentous solemnity.

Then, with a gesture that could not be mistaken, he pointed toward the sleeping Danes, drew his finger across his throat, and touched mine through the stakes.

Next he proceeded, with a sharp, flexible knife, to cut deftly and noiselessly into the fire-hardened stakes. It was astonishing how he was able to work thus, undetected, within a few feet of the standing sentry.

Not a sound came from the knife, and yet the coils of hard wood were coming away as if under a plane. And, as I watched him, I perceived another little fellow at the nearest corner of the square. He was working at the same task in frantic haste, and Bjorn, who lay there, was awake and watching him.

For a moment I was tempted to give the alarm; but Bjorn, as if anticipating my purpose, turned on me with a look of grave warning. I hesitated and, as I did so, the intention became useless.

For the two sections of the barricade fell, and simultaneously, with savage pipings and squeals, a swarm of tiny figures burst into the stockade

I saw the sentry fall, trust through the body with a miniature pike. I saw the Danes leap to their feet in bewilderment, still fuddled with ale and sleep; but before they could lay hand to sword they fell beneath the weapons of the Trolls.

And like a swarm of rats, the little figures went scurrying here and there, tripping up their giant adversaries and driving upward into their bodies with the sharp points of their toy weapons, hardly longer than walking-sticks.

I saw Asgeld, the high priest, snatch up the Loki banner, furl it, and sweep it round his head, while he shouted in the reminiscent joy of battle that might come to an old man. At the sight of the sacred emblem the little men seemed awed, but only for the moment.

One of them dodged under the banner, put his head beneath it, looked up, and with an absurd, deliberate pursing of the lips, as if to measure his blow, sent his pike home in the old man's body.

Meanwhile, as I tried to leap to my feet, a dozen pairs of little hands had pulled me bodily through the gap in the stockade, and I felt ropes being adjusted about my limbs Trussed and unable to move, I could only watch the massacre.

As the priest fell I saw flames leaping among the withes of the stockade. The dried wood began to blaze fiercely.

The goblin murderers dragged me out of reach of the flames. Near me I saw Ralph, groaning at his bonds, and Bjorn, securely tied, but with a faint smile on his face.

I wriggled toward him.

"Bjorn, have you a knife?" I asked him. "I can get one hand free. Perhaps we three can get free while they are burning the enclosure."

"Do you see flames then, Eric?" he asked me.

"Flames? Look at that!" I cried, as a dense column of smoke shot up toward the sky.

His question bewildered me, and before I could say anything more, the Trolls had come between us and dragged us apart. I looked from face to face. They were like imps' faces, like those absurd faces of Billikens that one sees in shop windows.

On each little countenance sat absorption, care, wise thought; and if any of these had ever been young, at least one and all were now well beyond life's meridian.

The only thing that helped me to keep my balance was the knowledge that a dwarf race had existed in Europe in Anglo-Saxon times, as such races still exist in other regions of the world to-day.

These were the dwarfs of fairy stories, the pixies, the Irish leprechawn, and such little folks. After all, it was not remarkable that they should have survived in this unknown outpost of the world.

But the sight of a face that winked and grimaced at me from among the others made my heart almost stop beating; for I recognized Egbert, the counselor of the Princess Editha.

He sidled toward me as I lay on the ground, and squatted down on his haunches beside me.

"Oh, Eric, greetings!" he said. "Have no fear, for in a little while you shall understand better.

"It is at the command of the wise woman Haggudra that we bring you to the princess. Are you willing to go in peace to her, and afterward to return hither?"

I nodded assent; whereon he slashed the ropes that bound my legs, leaving them free. Then my companions were similarly given freedom of movement. Our arms, however, were still fastened to our sides, with Troll cunning, so that we could hardly move them.

Ralph Wiston strained furiously at his bonds.

"I don't like this infernal business, Eric," he said angrily. "I didn't come here to get mixed up in things like this.

"Let's try to get back to the seashore. We can get a boat there. I'd rather be back among the ice-floes than with these bloodthirsty, little ruffians."

"Just wait till you have seen the princess!" I answered.

For I knew what the effect would be, so I did not take to heart the muttered imprecation that met my words. And, after all, our friends are still our friends, whatever their moods are.

It was not far from dawn, and as we got on our feet, the little men, swarming all about us, uttering little squeaks to hasten us, urged us along.

We took a path over the hills, which descended after a while until it entered what looked like a subterranean cavern, totally dark. Here we stopped for a moment, and Egbert sidling up to me, began to wind a filmy cord or twine about my finger-tips.

This he did to Ralph and Bjorn also, so that we three were bound with the same cord; then running ahead of us into the darkness, he disappeared.

I could no longer hear the faintest sound of the Trolls, but the twine slackened and tightened about my fingers alternately, guiding and drawing me effectively.

We went on for about half an hour, as I judged, in entire ignorance of our direction, turning many times, until suddenly we emerged into the twilight again, to find ourselves in a small valley, completely surrounded by high and unscalable cliffs.

It was the Trolls' city that we had reached. Everywhere in the soft chalk of the cliffs, little houses had been carved out, so that the cliffs were like tenements and the valley between like a high road. From each little window Troll boys and girls leaned out to watch us pass, chuckling and grimacing at us.

Troll mothers, carrying large, heavy-headed babies, with the same look of premature senility, held them up to see us, and themselves stared at us, their bright, birdlike eyes full of inquisitive wonder. Aged Trolls turned to watch us from the entrance of their dolls' apartments.

The whole city was scrupulously clean and orderly, and little Troll scavengers were bustling to and fro, with looks of earnest solicitude on their putty faces, as they removed fallen leaves and pieces of débris.

Here the twine ran out, and the dwarf Egbert appeared out of a house, with a

grin on his wise face, and dancing before us, motioned to us to take the lead.

We went on toward a flight of natural steps in the precipitous side of a cliff, doubtless a terrace erosion. Above this was a thicket, with a twisting path which ended on the hillside, in a little amphitheater, at the back of which was a deep excavation roofed by a wall of rock.

Here I saw a number of figures, both dwarfs and men of ordinary stature. The latter I discerned to be theows, or Saxon slaves.

But there were two figures there which drew my eyes instantly.

One was that of an aged woman, bent almost double with years. She leaned heavily on a stout stick, and when she raised her head, stretched upward like a turtle's, shook the wisps of white hair back and look at me, I thought her face the most diabolical that I had ever seen in living humanity.

The other was the Princess Editha. And now I saw the familiar form of the giant Knut behind her.

She looked at us as if hardly believing that it was I, until the Trolls halted us before her. Then she turned angrily upon Egbert.

"In bonds, and my friends, counselor?" she asked.

"It was Haggudra's orders, O princess!" muttered the little man, looking toward the witch.

Editha, drawing a knife from her girdle, cut our bonds, one after the other, looking all the time from me to Ralph, and less often from Ralph to me.

"It is you then, O Eric?" she asked incredulously. "How did you find the fairway through the ice into this land of ours? Verily, since you left us so unkindly in your own country I had no hope of seeing you again."

She spoke so innocently and kindly that I knew no memory remained to her of that night's demoniacal possession.

"O princess, that shall be told later!" I answered. "Suffice it that we three men have come here, pledged to offer ourselves to your service.

"And this is my friend Ralph of whom I spoke, who is my companion, and who I have always loved as a brother."

She turned her eyes upon him, and then, as if abashed by the frankness of his gaze, she let them fall again, while the red began to mantle her cheeks.

I thought them the most slendid couple that I had ever seen. My dream for Ralph promised to come true.

"O Princess Editha," he answered gallantly, "I pledge my faith in your service, to be loyal and true, even as my friend Eric has pledged me."

And raising her hand to his lips, he imprinted a kiss upon the tips of her slender fingers.

The act was so courtly and well-timed that it filled me with delight. Editha would not have been a woman if she had not looked pleased. Doubtless she was.

Only the flutter of her eyelid on her cheek told of the impression Ralph had made on her. And yet, so curiously are we constituted, so much of evil is mixed up in us, that I must confess I felt a strange pang, a sudden sense of desolation at the sight.

Jealousy? It was something I had never felt before. I think it was only a dawning regret that fate had destined me to live my romances in others' lives.

For just an instant I wished that Ralph were I, and I were he.

But the next moment I had shaken off the feeling, as the princess came quickly to where I stood. As she moved I noticed the hag Haggudra as I rightly surmised her to be—come cringing toward her.

Editha turned with a vehement gesture.

"Back old woman!" she cried. "Do you not know that your time has not come?"

Mumbling and shooting baleful glances at us, Haggudra withdrew.

Then the princess was walking between Ralph and myself, and Bjorn was following as if to ward off the Trolls, though these only gaped and grimaced after us.

Then my eyes fell upon Egbert standing before Haggudra, and I realized—Heaven alone knows how I did so—that the witch Haggudra was the princess's evil mentor, that the Troll folk were Haggudra's servants, but neutral of sympathies, and that

Egbert was a go-between, actuated secretly by good-will toward the princess.

"I must talk to you, my friends," said Editha in a low voice, as we strolled toward the further end of the little amphitheater under a sky already flushed with pink. "Eric, here, has doubtless told you, O Ralph, of the purpose which brought me to his own country—and yours.

"That purpose was unfulfilled, and I returned unsuccessful. My father, Theobald, I found, still reigns over his people, being Lord of Rangarok under Harald Deerfoot, who returns from a foray among the outer islands three days hence.

"When Harald learned that I had departed he was terribly wroth; since it was shown that it was my own act, he could not punish my people. Already messengers have apprized him of my return last moon, and he hastens southward for our nuptials.

"And these must take place, for the sake of the Anglian people, unless—"

That unfinished sentence, the innocent coquetry in the look that she flashed at Ralph, set my heart galloping. There was no doubting that these two were already in love.

"There is one chance by which I may be saved from a fate worse than death to me," she went on hurriedly. "You must know that by an ancient custom, Harald must hold tournament in Rangarok for three days, during which he must fight any man who challenges his supremacy; and if any man best him, that man wins me for his bride and becomes overlord of the city."

She looked at Ralph again, and he kindled to her glance as tow under the flame.

"I will fight for you, O my princess!" he cried. "And I will overthrow King Harald in the tournament, and win you for my overlordship in Ranagorok."

"So others have said," she answered, with a touch of archness. "However, I do not doubt your will, my lord Ralph; if you win, I have no choice but submission.

"But of these matters my counselor, Egbert, will speak further to you in Rangarok. There is this more to be said now:

"A curse has lain on me since childhood, for when I was a cradled infant I was stolen from my mother's side by night by a thievish Troll woman—one of those who, having lost their own infants, crave the child of a mortal

"In those days, as now, the witch Haggudra was queen of the Trolls, for they say that she is almost immortal, and lived even in the days before our ancestors left Angleland. Through her power I was restored.

"But this was the bargain that she made: by night I should be the Princess Editha, but when day comes I must take on my Troll nature again. So much I know, but of what I am during the day I have only a dim memory, and from sunrise to sunset only the witch Haggudra possesses power over me, and Egbert who has knowledge of certain spells.

"Therefore, O Ralph, remember that it is I, Editha, who speaks to you. So if you come by day to Rangarok and find me changed, listen not to me, disregard me, disobey me; for it is then not I who speak, but the accursed Troll changeling."

Overcome by the pathos of her words I, too, raised her hand and kissed it. But this time Editha seemed unmoved by the action.

It was a very different thing from having one's fingers kissed by such a man as Ralph Wiston.

I turned to Ralph and began to translate what Editha had told me; but I was surprised when Ralph said that he had understood the greater part of it.

Yet, though they would look strange enough if set down on paper, the words of the North Anglian dialect are much more akin to modern English than is the Flemish, for instance, the nearest of modern languages.

"I have your pledge then, O my friends," said Editha sweetly. "You will be present in Rangarok at the festivities, and Egbert, who will be there, will show you what must be done

"And now you must go. Do not linger, for when the sun appears, the witch Haggudra resumes her sway."

This time she put out her hand to Ralph as if expecting his salutation, and, quite by

an afterthought, to me. Then she signed to Egbert, who came quickly up to us.

"Delay not," he whispered, "for if you are not above the cliffs, whither no Troll may go in daytime, before the sun rises, Haggudra's magic holds you to your death."

"Good by, O princess!" cried Ralph, turning toward Editha.

To my surprise she did not seem to hear him. She was standing still like an automaton, her blank eyes fixed on space. Then I remembered, and knew the meaning of this portent.

"Come!" I cried, pulling Ralph by the sleeve.

But he was still looking at Editha. Bjorn nudged him, but he would not stir.

And I saw a smile of malice break out on old Haggudra's withered face. New life seemed to animate her, she hobbled toward us, bobbing and curtsying.

"Editha!" cried Ralph.

Again I saw that awful look on the princess's face. She beckoned to Ralph and stretched out her arms toward him.

"Come to me, O Ralph!" she whispered.

He started toward her. As he did so I saw a ray of sunlight break through a chink in the cliffs.

And instantly, as Ralph, like a man hypnotized, was walking toward Editha and Haggudra, now by her side, and nodding and chuckling and whispering to her—instantly, putting all my weak strength into the blow, I knocked Ralph Wiston to the ground and, seizing him by the coat, began to drag him to where Egbert stood, furiously gesticulating, upon a little pathway that ran up the cliff behind the amphitheater.

As I did so I saw Editha's eyes blaze with fury. Balked of her prey, she had become as upon that awful night on the caravel.

"To the sacrifice!" she raved. "Bring him to me, ye Trolls, that I may drink his heart's blood and grow strong on it!"

Drawing a knife from her bosom, she rushed at Ralph.

But now Bjorn and I had lifted him bodily to the pathway, and Editha's upward blow missed him, and the knife clashed against the rocks and fell from her hand. I saw the goblin crew swarm toward us.

But suddenly the edge of the sun uplifted itself over the hills.

And instantly, like fantoms of the night, the Trolls had vanished, scurrying away like rats into the recesses of the rocks.

Turning as I ran, panting, and clutching at Ralph, I saw Haggudra pulling at Editha's arm; and the look of baffled rage and malice on the old witch's face was the same as that which I had seen in Editha's eyes.

Then panting and stumbling, with Ralph on his feet now, and a willing fugitive, we found ourselves at the top of the cliff Blindly we continued to run, into a blaze of sunlight which, till our eyes had grown accustomed to it, made all the world a dancing fantasmagoria.

Then Ralph uttered a wild cry and pointed before him. I looked and saw, not twenty yards away, through the thickets, the stockade, unburned, just as it had been when we entered it, and the sentinel in the gap, leaning against the stakes heavy with sleep.

But when we turned we found no sign of the cliff up which we had come. There was nothing but the rocky hillside, stretching away toward the valley below.

Bewildered, we passed into the stockade, unseen by the sleeping sentry. The Danes lay, snoring, upon their sacking. Old Asgeld, his white beard adroop over his chest, slept by the dying fire.

We looked at one another in stark surprise. This was more terrifying even than the massacre.

Then Bjorn spoke.

"O my friends, this was what I suspected from the first," he said, "for I have heard legends of the power of the Trolls. It was all magic, such as the Troll folk know well how to wield—illusion, as the moderns call it."

"But we saw Editha!" I cried.

"Verily, we entered the Troll city, and we saw Editha; the princess, and the accursed witch, Haggudra! But for the rest, there was neither slaying nor burning. That was just such a trick as the Troll folk love to play."

"We saw the princess," muttered Ralph, and I saw that, with the spell of her personality strong upon him still, he could not determine how much was real, and how much make-believe.

The look on his face went to my heart.

"Ralph," I said, "this is my understanding of the matter. It was hypnotism. Do you understand? No magic about it—or, rather, the modern explanation and equivalent of magic.

"A power that is used daily by practitioners in every large hospital on earth. We aren't out of our element; we know this power and we can guard against it."

"She looked like a devil," muttered Ralph. "And I—I tell you, Eric," he cried, catching me by the wrist, "I didn't believe what you told me about her, but it's all true

"She means to me just about as much as you said she'd mean—and more. What is it? In Heaven's name, tell me!"

"A clear case of dual personality," I answered. "It's hypnotism again—the work of the witch Haggudra.

"I suppose the old hag got her into a state of expectancy by telling her that story about having changed her in her cradle—and then it was easy. Nothing of magic about that either, Ralph. And we'll cure that some day, by the same means of suggestion."

"But that depth of evil—can it exist in all of us, unsuspected?" he asked, more as if talking to himself than to me.

I could not answer that. The secrets of personality are still hidden, even from the most profound.

But I knew that the girl's true nature remained, struggling against the evil spirit. Should we not meet her, then, and save her from King Harald, as she had given me to believe, upon the opening day of Harald's tournament?

I believed so, and I believed that, though the massacre had been illusion, we three had really seen the Troll city beneath the ground, and talked with Editha.

And, looking toward the pinnacles and peaks of Rangarok, all wrapped in the golden light of morning, I vowed to free the princess from the hypnotic spell cast by the witch, and give her into Ralph Wiston's arms.

CHAPTER IX.

IN RANGAROK

A FEW miles from the city a little cavalcade met us, consisting of three or four pages, leading four of the most magnificent horses that I have ever seen The boys, who were gaily clad in silks and velvets, dropped to the ground and doffed their bonnets to us.

"Mount, strangers," said Asgeld, "for it would not be seemly that you should come afoot into Rangarok."

And, suiting the action to his words, the old man sprang, armored as he was, into the saddle of a splendid bay, while Bjorn, Ralph, and I, each choosing his steed, mounted also, the Danes closing about us.

We had surmounted the last hill and were approaching the city, whose magnificence increased with every stride of our horses. Around it was a fertile tract of land, green under frequent rains, such as even now was spreading like a fine mist over the country.

I saw a massive wall of stone, surmounted with many towers and fronted by a broad ditch of water that ran, like a serpent, twisting in and out of the angles of the fortifications, till it bent round with the walls and disappeared in the distance.

And, towering above the narrow streets, rose the great buildings, climbing constantly as the heart of Rangarok was approached, the topmost point, or citadel, uprearing itself with many a pinnacle toward the low-lying clouds.

Out of the gates a multitude began pouring toward us. And, accustomed as I was beginning to be to our surroundings, I rubbed my eyes, wondering whether this, too, were illusion, and destined to pass away.

For here they jostled each other, just as in the old books of my delight—knave and squire, theow, jarl, and thegn, some in the long robes and costly furs of dignity, the many in the short, leather kilt and sandals of the Saxon

There were girls, too, as bright and human as our own at home, to all appearance, in spite of their strange attire; and all came chattering and laughing toward us, and, surrounding our guards at a respectful distance, cheered us and cried out in welcome and in wonder.

Old Asgeld seemed to be verging upon a communicative mood. I had seen the old fellow smiling and stroking his white beard, as if his thoughts were pleasant ones. I was about to venture on some remark when he turned in his saddle as he rode beside me.

"O Eric," he said—for I had told him our names—"what think you of Rangarok? Is there a city of the Byzantines, except that of Constantine, of such a splendid aspect? Nay, is not Rangarok the equal in magnificence of Roum herself?"

"Truly, I almost think so," I answered diplomatically.

"And yet you have not seen the splendor of our capital," he answered. "And the welcome that awaits you is worthy of such a city."

Here, as he began smiling and stroking his beard again, I asked him, a little uneasily, what was expected of us in Rangarok.

"That I will now tell you," he answered, looking hard at me. "Know, O Eric, that, like most people, we have customs which may not be changed.

"Know, too, that, save for Harald Deerfoot, our king, who is not of true Danish birth, never a stranger has crossed the ice during this century past; consequently our ancient laws have suffered much through disuse."

"And what are these laws, O Asgeld?"

"That the gods be propitiated," he answered. "We know well the day will come when a stranger, crossing the ice-way, shall pull the sword of Odin from its sheath in Odin's temple; and, when this comes about, the splendors of Rangarok shall fall, and he shall rule the remnants of the Danish people.

"Therefore, to all who come, the opportunity must be given of pulling Odin's sword from its sheath, which none yet has done since the great Odin placed it there before the memory of man begins. And, if ye fail in that, as assuredly ye will, there remains the second test.

"That, if ye will, and prefer not to go straight to the end, ye meet Harald, our king, in fair battle. And, if any of you vanquish him, he shall rule in his stead.

"Verily, in this way Harald became our king; for, though he could not pull Odin's sword from its sheath, yet he overthrew him who ruled before him, whose name may not be spoken, and so ruled in his stead.

"But since no man has ever looked on Harald's flashing sword and lived. I doubt not ye will prefer to go straight to the end."

"What is this end?" I asked, feeling decidedly uncomfortable as I saw the old pagan chuckling and smiling to himself again.

"That, O stranger, it is not now permissible to reveal," he responded. "But take heart, for assuredly ye shall either pull Odin's sword from its sheath, being men of much vigor of body; or failing that, perchance one of you will overthrow Harald and rule in his place.

"And till the morrow, as is the custom among civilized races such as ours, ye are guests of honor, and shall be tented and feasted in the precincts of King Theobald, the Atheling."

"What's he saying now?" inquired Ralph behind me, leaning forward upon his horse and spurring it toward mine as old Asgeld rode a little away. "I can understand something of the Anglian, but this Danish is mere gibberish to me."

I was about to tell him when Bjorn came up on the other side and drew him back. I heard the two in discourse behind me, but could not distinguish what Bjorn was telling him.

The news was not particularly joyful, but I tried to show my unconcern as I saw old Asgeld eying me, and pulling at his beard and trying to hide the malicious smile on his furrowed face. I had no doubt that some form of bloody sacrifice had been devised for us.

And yet, strangely enough, I had an implicit confidence that somehow we should escape from our difficulties. I had staked all my faith on Ralph.

And I believed that, on the morrow, failing to pull the sword from its sheath - and this, no doubt, was some sort of trick such as the ancient nations had - he would overthrow Harald and win Editha

I look back as I rode, and saw him sitting on his horse, looking every inch a king. My trust would not prove to have been misplaced.

I felt a reaction of joy in my heart. And so we rode on, until the massive walls loomed above us, and we crossed the wide drawbridge into the city.

The streets were packed with people, cheering us, and so thickly clustered that it was all our guards could do to force a passage, which they did with the flats of their swords, letting them fall unmercifully on the heads of all who stood in their way.

From the flat housetops flowers were thrown before us. A medley of strange cries, more strangely reminiscent of modern English, buzzed about us. And it came to me that these people, knowing the old legend, looked on us as deliverers.

I saw the Danes scowling and guessed that they realized the import of the city's joy.

But as we progressed, constantly ascending the narrow, cobbled street, my wonder grew. This was a city of thousands, and ever beyond us loomed up the massive citadel, until the houses suddenly fell away and disclosed a city within a city.

A fairy city, such as the most cunning architect could hardly have conceived. It dwarfed the city behind us, with its soaring spires, mounting and ever mounting, till the topmost pinnacles appeared incredibly remote.

All round it ran a mighty wall, studded with towers, but without a ditch, since it would have been impossible to excavate into the solid granite of that mountain top.

And the whole seemed poised in air. For, as we neared the gateway, I realized that there was a space of perhaps fifty feet between the containing wall and the citadel, a sheer drop from the wall's summit into immeasurable depths.

The only access was by means of an immense stairway, spanning this interval, and coiling like a silken strand up toward the front of the buildings.

And now the explanation of this extraordinary and divine construction, involving some lost principle of the builder's art, grew clear.

Rangarok, or rather the citadel which was the heart of Rangarok, was built upon the summit of a narrow, towering peak, cut off from the city proper by a fissure in the earth, perhaps five hundred feet in depth.

The wall of the citadel was built on the far side of this fissure; the citadel was on the other side of the chasm; and across this chasm had been flung the fairy bridges of which I counted four—not straight as a suspension bridge is thrown, but in a spiral, one end terminating in the gateway, the other, two hundred feet beyond and seventy-five above, upon a level with the top of the peak.

If you can imagine a rope thrown by a sailor, or better, a strand of silk thrown by a girl, poised in the air at the instant when it uncurls, you can picture the wonderful bridge that hung before my eyes.

Old Asgeld whispered a password to a guard, and the gates swung open—they seemed to work by hydraulic power. Our horses began to ascend the steep and winding ramp of the bridge, which ended in another gateway under the palace.

Looking back as the bridge wound, I could see the city of Rangarok beneath us, black with people; behind this the ridges of the mountains, like folds in a table-cloth, and far in the distance, the arctic ice.

"Tell me, O Eric, hath Byzantium, as we sometimes call Constantine's city, anything to show more fair than this?" he asked again.

"Nothing, O Asgeld," I answered. "It seems to me that spirits, and not men, have built this city."

"Aye," he said, nodding his head. "The Trolls built it at the behest of Odin, who still is worshiped here, though the god of the Christians also hath his temple here.

"Yet all this will pass away upon the day when the appointed one shall pluck the sword of Odin from its sheath."

I was incapable of saying more just then.

My pulses were singing in my ears, and I realized that this was due to the altitude.

We must have been many thousand feet above sea-level. The air was vaporous from the low-lying clouds, which dispersed a gentle rain like a mist.

Passing through the gateway we found ourselves in an enclosure of perhaps a half-mile by one-third in extent. This was the very summit of the peak, and in the center was a wonderful building of the whitest marble, not very large, but shining like snow against the great pile of rock beneath it, black as ebony.

All around this outcrop the ground had been leveled, no doubt through centuries of patient workmanship on the part of the people, with such primitive tools as they had at their disposal.

On one side was the palace proper. On others were extensive buildings, which I took to be colleges or public offices. These were not all contiguous, and between them I caught glimpses of the wall of the citadel, with the guards patrolling it.

And I was astonished and pleased to see a building surmounted with a cross, and evidently the cathedral of the Anglian populace—nay, as we rode past I heard the chant of priests and saw that it was densely packed with worshipers.

"This, too, shall pass away," said Asgeld, nodding contemptuously toward the edifice.

We rode on, rounding the mass of black rock, with Odin's temple perched high upon it, and came upon an open space with a structure looking much like the grand stand of a race-course.

It had been newly erected, and consisted of a long row of wooden seats, covered with red cloth. It fronted on the long side of an ellipse, down whose center a rough partition of wooden boards had been set up. It was the tilting-field of Harald's tournament.

Carpenters were still at work upon the lists, and a dozen or more white tents had been pitched, at either end. One of these, at the far end of the lists, flew a flag showing a double-headed eagle on a yellow background.

"King Harald's tent," said Asgeld.

"And his flag?"

"Truly, the eagle is his symbol, and it has ever proved a fortunate one," he answered.

The sight startled me, for the double-headed eagle is, of course, the Russian emblem. I had expected that he would have shown a ship, or, at least, some battle device of the ancient Danes.

I knew the eagle had been used by the Romans, but had always believed that the double-headed bird was of modern origin.

However, I had no time to wonder. For a vast concourse of people were already buzzing about us, having evidently heard the news of our arrival; and just then still more came pouring out of the cathedral doors.

They were headed by a procession of a dozen priests, who chanted as they moved beneath an uplifted crozier, which was upheld in the hand of a venerable old man, clothed in coarsest sackcloth. As he approached us his blue eyes scanned us benignantly; his face was drawn with suffering, and his body emaciated with fasting.

At the sight of him old Asgeld made a sign to us to dismount. But he himself remained on horseback, and, spurring his animal forward, he made it rear until its uplifted hoofs almost grazed the old priest's forehead

"O king in Rangarok, by the grace of our Lord Harald the King, behold these strangers!" he shouted insultingly.

Then, turning his steed without the slightest ceremony, he clattered off toward the gateway, followed by his Danes, while we three faced the old man in discomfiture and humiliation at having been the medium of the affront.

But I could see at once that this was both designed and customary. The old priest looked at us patiently, and yet eagerly.

"I bid you welcome to Rangarok," he said, "for verily, since the first days of my youth, none but my Lord Harald, the deer-footed, has crossed the fairway of the ice to come into our land. It was in an evil day that he came, for our old oppressors, the Danes, had grown mild before he rallied them to his eagle standard for murder and foray.

"Know ye that I am Theobald, King of

the North Anglians, and ruler of an oppressed and miserable race, which looks anxiously to its deliverance. I doubt not that already ye know the perilous fate that awaits you; nevertheless, if ye are indeed men of our kindred, as was revealed in a dream to Asgeld, Loki's priest, tell me, that I may rejoice in it."

I bent low before Editha's father.

"O king," I answered, "we three men are come into your land for no other purpose than to aid you and yours against the oppressor.

"One of us" I took Ralph by the hand and led him forward—"is of your stock; and I, though of other races, am by birth a citizen of an Anglian people. And this one"—here I indicated Bjorn—"is, indeed, of a race once akin to the Dane, but hating him for his murderous cruelty."

How my pulses thrilled as Ralph confronted Theobald. He was unmistakably the leader of our party; he looked the noblest man in that assemblage.

He had not the stature, nor the strength of Bjorn, but he had a moral power that was convincing. The people recognized it. Even the clouded faces of the pale priests brightened as their eyes lit on him.

"It is good," said Theobald simply. "Tomorrow Harald, our lord, returns from his foray in the outer isles. For the rest of the day take your ease in your tent, and rest. My page shall conduct you, and the people shall not disturb you."

He called to a little page, dressed in coarse monk's-cloth, who came forward and led us away toward one of the largest tents, a square marquee situated at the nearer end.

It contained straw paillasses, covered with some gay-colored cloth, and a low table. We had hardly flung ourselves down when another page approached, carrying a tray with spiced wines and pasties containing some sort of fish, which in our famished state we found good eating, even though we had to use our fingers.

And after that we slept until late in the afternoon. It was Ralph who awakened me.

"Eric," he said, "I heard old Asgeld telling you something this morning. Bjorn translated it for me, but I don't know that I got the drift of it. What's that about pulling a sword out of a sheath and then fighting this King Harald?"

"It seems there's a sword stuck into a sheath somewhere," I answered. "Nobody has been able to pull it out. Probably it's fused or welded. If we can't pull it out we fight in the tournament."

"Darn nonsense," said Ralph uneasily.

"Yes, but see here, Ralph," I said earnestly. "You're going to pull the sword from the sheath. Or else you'll fight Harald. And you'll beat him.

"You've got the strength and you've got the courage. Don't I remember seeing you win that broadsword bout at college?

"Well, these folks aren't a patch on us moderns in any form of athletics. That's all well established by statistics.

"And you're going to win a throne, and the princess."

He looked at me curiously.

"You're a good chap, Eric," he said. "Lots of men would have wanted to do these things themselves."

"Not me," I answered, looking down at my puny limbs.

But, in fact, my muscles had acquired a considerable development during our long ocean trip. I had to acknowledge that, physically, I was a very different man from the neurasthenic being who had sailed from New York aboard the Editha in the beginning of summer.

Something of my father's great strength —of which my mother had told me—seemed to have crept into my limbs under the influence of sun and open air, so that I was constantly surprised at the feats I found myself capable of accomplishing.

But sun and winds could never cure the shrinking from danger, the timidity of one born with my inherited nerves, the legacy of my mother's sufferings.

Ralph got up and yawned. At that moment he seemed to me the embodiment of strength and fearlessness. I looked at him proudly as we stood together in the door of the marquee.

I saw that the space about the lists was black with people, gazing curiously toward us. As we appeared shouts rang out, and

good Anglo-Saxon cheers, odd enough, but very comforting. Great must have been the hopes that had been builded upon our advent

Suddenly, parting the crowd, there came a flashing figure on horseback, which resolved itself into that of a woman. She was clad in armor, and in her hand she held a little whip, and, as she rode, she plied it unmercifully upon the heads of the populace.

CHAPTER X.

THE OATH OF BJORN.

STRAIGHT toward the barrier of the tilting-field the rider came, and, putting her mount to the leap, crossed it and came cantering toward us.

She was clad in shining mail, and her long, fair, unbound hair streamed behind her. To my amazement I recognized Editha.

She made her horse rear not two paces away, and looked contemptuously at me, not recognizing me, and then at Ralph.

"Hail, stranger theows!" she cried contemptuously. "Hail to Odin's land! Tomorrow ye shall taste the pleasures of the sacrifice, ye Anglian rabble from a far country!"

Then, still looking at Ralph, her eyes seemed to soften.

"But perchance this tall fellow will become Odin's man and a follower of my Lord Harald," she said more kindly. "No doubt two victims will suffice to appease Odin's wrath. What sayest thou, theow?"

I was astonished to see Ralph go boldly toward her, and, placing his hand on her horse's neck, begin to converse with her in low tones.

And evidently she understood—though, quite clearly, she neither recognized him nor remembered the scene of the night previous. She understood, for now they were talking together, and her head was bent toward his, and there was a pleased and cruel smile upon her face.

What a diplomatist my friend was!

I went back into the tent. Nobody wanted to see me there, and I guessed the sight of me might infuriate Editha and undo the clever work that Ralph was evidently accomplishing on our behalf.

I saw Bjorn standing in the middle of the tent, looking out at them. As I came in he turned and placed his hands on my shoulders, looking earnestly into my eyes.

"Eric," he said, "my friend now and no more my master—listen to me! Once, long ago, when the second sight came upon me, I saw three faces, as in a mirror.

"One of them was that of yonder woman, and it turned toward mine and cried to me to come and help her from the witchcraft that bound her. The second was yours.

"That is why I knew, when I saw you in the flesh, that I must follow you till death. Only, my friend, beware of the third face, for on it I saw guile and selfishness, betrayal and broken faith. And the third face was his."

He looked toward Ralph Wiston.

"Nonsense, Bjorn!" I cried angrily. "Ralph is the best fellow in the world. We were at college together.

"I know him through and through. He has always been my friend, and he would rather die than do a dishonorable action."

But Bjorn was not listening to me. With an unconscious gesture he had thrown back his loose cloak, revealing the upper part of his body, nude save for a sleeveless vest of home-knit wool, such as the Norse fishermen wear. And for the first time I saw him thus, and stared in amazement and admiration at his mighty build.

For the man was a mass of rippling muscle, coiling and changing under a skin sleek as a panther's. It was the arms, the waist, the torso of a Hercules.

He flung his arms up with a dramatic gesture.

"By the memory of my murdered kin," he cried, "hear me, O true and living God! I swear, with Thine aid, to avenge, not in the old Norse way of blood, but by overturning the false idols in this land and establishing Thy true faith.

"As the vision came to me, so grant its fulfilment, and through me let Rangarok fall, the mighty Rangarok, as I saw in my dream, because she is accursed!"

He turned away with a sudden, confused look that reminded me of the look on his

face that day aboard the Editha, when I had surprised him in his trance, and returned to his paillasse.

Presently Ralph came back. I was naturally interested in knowing what he had said to Editha.

Accomplished diplomat that he was, I had no doubt he had paved the way for a reconciliation with her, even in her morbid and unnatural condition of hypnotism, or, as we should now say, dual personality.

If we could win her over, when in that condition, the future would be much plainer sailing.

But he would not speak to me, except to give curt answers to my questions, and, knowing that he was working for us, I forbore to ask too many. Presently the little page appeared again with our supper, much the same as the meal we had enjoyed before.

Soon night came on.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCENT OF A STRANGE BEAST.

THAT was a night of the most turbulent dreams and the wildest anticipations I have ever had. I had the impression that Ralph was as sleepless as I, but that he did not wish to enter into conversation with me.

Indeed, I did not blame him. The morrow, with its doubts and fears, lay heavily on me.

First there must come the withdrawing of the sword—probably an impossible task.

Then the tilting.

Finally—what?

I guessed, from Editha's taunts, that it had reference to some hideous act of pagan ritual; and, trembling with all my cowardly terrors dominating me, I prayed that deliverance might come to us through my friend.

And I had actually begun to sleep dreamlessly at last when I was awakened by a gentle tug at my sleeve. I half started up, and then I saw the wise face of little Egbert bending over mine.

"Have no fear, Eric, but come with me," he said. "There is one who would speak with you."

And, as I hesitated, torn between my fears and my desire to awaken Ralph, he added:

"Truly, O Eric, this thing is not Troll magic, but wrought in your interests, that ye may all live and not die."

I crept after him under the lifted flap of the tent. I found myself in the presence of Editha, standing before me under the waning light of the stars, with hands clasped, very sorrowful and meek.

"O my friends," she said, "for my sake you have come here, to save me and my people; and assuredly I can hardly uphold the heaviness of my heart because of it.

"Therefore, I have summoned you, Eric, to say this: There is a secret passage underground, by following which ye may win to safety. Egbert, my counselor, shall conduct you to the shore, and place a long-boat at your disposal, in which you shall make the fairway of the ice, and so, with reasonable chance, regain your country.

"How say ye?"

"For myself, O princess," I answered, "gladly I would accept, for I am not a fighting man, and I fear danger. But my friend, Ralph Wiston, is a man; he cannot play the coward; in his name I must answer, no."

She smiled wistfully, and there was a curious look that I could not analyze in her eyes as she watched me.

"Truly, O Eric, I think it is your custom to disparage your prowess," she answered. "Yet I thank you in your friend's name, for fear would not be meet in such a man as he, who can sway the hearts of women as the wind sways the sapling."

And again—I confess it because I aim to set down only the truth I felt that unworthy sense of jealousy of my friend. I longed at that moment to have been cast in heroic mold.

Here was I, five feet six or seven, much the average man in strength, but with my heart thumping like a steam-hammer at the slightest danger, beginning to dream impossible things of this woman, this ideal of all that I had ever conceived.

But it was only for a moment. Shame and remorse banished the unworthy feeling. I bowed, and little Egbert spoke up briskly.

"Now, O Eric, I have to show you a wonderful thing," he said. "And, since one of you this day must meet King Harald, who is now approaching Rangarok, attend diligently. There is a trick whereby he may be overthrown even by one not of his prowess."

"It is the custom of our people only to fight fairly," I answered.

"Well spoken!" cried the princess, clapping her hands. And somehow that heartened me wonderfully. For I felt that, remote as these people were from us, the same old English sense of fair play animated them.

"Yea," said Egbert, "but Harald knows nothing of that, for what he cannot get by force he gets by guile. It was by guile that he possessed himself of Rangarok, after he had been driven out in an uprising.

"He treacherously put to death the Lady Editha's three brothers, slaying them with the poisoned cup at a banquet in their honor."

I saw Editha turn away to hide her tears.

"Therefore," said Egbert, "have no scruples, but listen to the incredible thing I have to say—a thing I have never yet found a man to credit.

"Nevertheless, it is a tradition among our wise men that, in the hot parts of the earth, there is to be found a beast whose nose is of such proportions that it sweeps the ground as it walks; moreover, at the end of this nose—scoff not! there is a finger, wherewith it can pick up even the finest needle from the ground!"

He stopped and looked at me with pursed lips, as if to see what effect his story had on me.

"I have not only heard of, but have even seen such beasts in captivity," I answered.

"Nay, do not mock me," answered Egbert, "for it is well known that such is the strength and ferocity of this creature that no chain has yet been forged which will hold him.

"But know that, in ancient times, there was a wise king named Annibal, who, by his arts, tamed these beasts for battle. And such was the fear which they inspired in the horses of the army of Roum, which went out to fight with him, that ever since the smell of this beast hath tamed the fiercest steed that ever strode under the saddle.

"Here, O Eric," he continued, producing a small vial from his tunic, "is a compound prepared from a portion of the body of this beast, concentrated by alchemists of old. Now this is what I shall do:

"This day, when the time comes to bring your champion the charger of King Theobald, on which he is to ride, I shall plug his nostrils, that he may smell nothing; and about his head and throat I shall rub some of this drug, whose smell is imperceptible to men, but will throw Harald's horse into a panic, and enable your champion to win the victory.

"What think you? Is this worth while, that ye may save the Princess Editha and rule the North Anglian land?"

I thought, and, as I thought, I saw the princess's eyes fixed on mine in that same bewildering fashion, which made my heart trip and hammer, and yet shamed me that I was not a man like Ralph.

And, as I thought of Ralph, wedded to her, and ruling over the kingdom, and the alternative of a shameful death, my decision was made.

I would do this unfair thing, for Ralph's and Editha's sake, taking the blame and never letting my friend know that he had come by fraud into his kingdom.

"I agree," I said.

"It is well," answered Egbert. "And now you must return, for dawn approaches, and you well know that we must not be here after sunrise. Yet there is one thing more that my Lady Editha has to say to you."

She came toward me and put her hands in mine.

"Eric, my friend," she said, "this day each of you shall play the man, according as God hath given him his part."

She pulled something woven from her bosom and handed it to me. I unrolled a silken flag. And on the dainty fabric of white, woven with patient skill, there was a cross of red.

"My work, Eric," she said. "Under that banner your champion shall fight to-morrow."

"I shall give it to my friend," I answered.

"To your champion," she answered enigmatically. And she gave me her hand.

I kissed it in my clumsy fashion, thinking how regally she moved, and how mean I seemed beside her; and when I had let it fall, I saw her looking at me with the same enigmatical expression that I could never understand.

"He shall fight under that banner, and for me," she whispered.

"Ralph cannot lose!" I cried.

"Your champion," she responded, leaving me wondering at her persistence. And then Egbert and she were gone, leaving me staring after them; and in the east was the first blush of dawn.

I went back into the tent, to find Ralph awake and tossing upon his paillasse. As I entered he beckoned me to him.

"Where on earth have you been?" he asked irritably.

So I told him of Egbert's summons, and of my conversation with the dwarf and the Lady Editha, omitting all reference to the trick that was to be played. When I spoke of the suggested flight he caught me fiercely by the wrist.

"You mean to tell me that you refused it?" he demanded. "Eric, I can't believe you. They offered us a chance of freedom -and a return home in a ship—and you refused it?"

"What else could I have done?" I answered. "It was a hard choice, Ralph, but I wasn't going to have you called a coward."

And then and there I nearly told him of the drug.

He let my hand fall and lay back, staring at me.

"You're a queer chap, Eric," he said, "and plucky, too. I don't believe there's one man in a million would have had the grit to do that."

"It wasn't a case of grit," I told him. "I did it for you, because I knew that was what you would wish; and, I tell you, it was a mighty hard thing to do."

He nodded and mumbled something, and, covering his head with his blanket, appeared to sleep. And I lay down and waited for the dawn.

Presently, when the light was brighter, I heard a confused and distant sound from the lower city. I went out of the tent, passing down the field, beyond the colleges, and the cathedral, and the great palace.

Nobody was stirring, and none accosted me until I reached the near gateway that led upon the bridge. Then a dour-looking Norseman, armed with a pike, leaped out of an arch and leveled it at my breast.

I drew back in sudden fear, but as he made no further attempt to molest me, I stood back, looking down upon the city of Rangarok. At first I could see nothing but a low belt of clouds, veiling even the lower end of the splendid bridge.

Then, gradually, as if an invisible hand were rolling up a curtain, it lifted. I saw, first, the incredible spirals of the bridge, and then the encircling walls; then the lower city came into view, with its own walls; then the misty campaign beyond, and the mountaintops.

And I stood still, gazing at the spectacle as if I saw it for the first time.

It was awful in its magnificence; and not the least so was the mighty crest on which was perched the citadel, and the bridges, built surely by Trolls or gods, as Asgeld had told me.

The murmurs beneath me grew louder and clearer and, as the last strands of the fog dispersed, I saw the city streets filled with a dense rabble, running beside a procession that moved along them upward toward the bridges.

I saw a company of perhaps two hundred men, giants, all of them, clad in armor that flashed back the rays of the rising sun, and wearing helmets of steel that shone with dazzling whiteness. They walked with a slow, but perfectly timed accord and carried great swords.

Before them marched a guard of perhaps fifty archers, and between the swordsmen and the archers rode a giant of a man on a milk-white steed with breast-piece and spiked frontlet.

The man himself wore chain armor which, as he approached, I saw to be of links so fine that it resembled rather a coarsely woven fabric. His head was bare, and the long, red-yellow locks floated over his shoulders.

He looked about five and forty years

of age, but tough as an oak, and the very prince of fighting men.

Suddenly five trumpets pealed from the battlements, the trumpeters, standing, silhouetted against the sky, like ebony statues.

And the great gates swung open, and thus King Harald and his retainers came across the bridge into Rangarok.

I had stood wrapped in wonder at the sight, but now suddenly the sentry at the near end of the bridge turned on me with so menacing a look that I made a hasty retreat, to find the grounds behind me crowded with people—no doubt the students and retainers who inhabited the citadel since none had entered from the lower town.

There was a gasp of surprise as I approached them. And then, discerning my evident danger, the friendly Anglians made a lane for me, closing about me to conceal me from the sight of the approaching procession.

So I hurried, a pitiful figure, in my weather-stained New York clothes, through that crowd of dignified Anglians, through the students, in their gay robes, and the theows and serfs, in their leather kilts and stockings, until I found a vantage place behind a buttress, and perching on this, could see the spectacle unmolested and unnoticed by the other sightseers

The trumpets sounded again, the near gates opened; and I saw King Theobald, accompanied by a retinue of his monks, make his way through the crowd, which parted right and left for him. As he drew near the oncoming Danes he stepped forward, and parting his long sackcloth gown, bent low upon one knee, placing his hands, palms outward, above his head in apparent servitude.

And I saw the figure of King Harald step forward alone.

For a few moments the great lord of Rangarok stood motionless, surveying the kneeling crowd; then, with a gesture that was at once condescending and proud, he extended his gauntleted hands, and the humble old Anglian king placed his between them.

And now another incident occurred which made me forget my own fears in anger and resolve. For, out of the retinue of the king, there strode the Princess Editha. Haughtily she took her stand at Harald's side and put forth her own hands as Harald had done.

And the meek old king put his hands between his daughter's in token of submission.

I ground my teeth at that, and my face was suffused with blood. I felt an invincible determination to end the spell which the Troll devil had wrought in her.

I stepped out of my hiding-place—into the arms of Bjorn, clothed in a long robe.

"Are you mad, Eric?" he cried fiercely. "How long a shrift would you have from these pagans if they caught you here outside the tilting-ground, where we cannot be harmed? Come!"

I think I made a little resistance, but he dragged me away as if I had been a child. Fortunately, so engrossed were the spectators with the scene, nobody even saw us.

As we went, he talked to me as a brother might, until I grew calm and ceased to babble. And so we found our tent again, and I saw Ralph in the entrance, with the two little pages busily fastening a long robe, similar to Bjorn's, about him.

He nodded to me absently, but did not speak. And I in turn resigned myself to the pages' ministrations; and afterward, feeling almost imposing in my robe of white linen, with its fur collar and sleeves, I tried to eat, and tried to make Ralph eat.

All the while we could see the crowd buzzing about King Harald, who was evidently going into the palace. We had just finished our meal when a gateway in the great pile opened, and we saw him come forth with his escort and enter the tent which flew the double-headed eagle, at the other end of the lists.

Then, with sudden remembrance, I reached up and fastened Editha's flag to the flag-pole of our tent, hauling upon the cord until it was in place.

All the while Ralph eyed me moodily, but did not speak. Bjorn was as silent as he. We were already hypnotized by the unreality of the scene, and by the unknown that was to come.

So there we waited, under the cross, while opposite us, King Harald's pennon fluttered

and floated in the chill breeze that blew incessantly about the peak of Rangarok.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SWORD OF ODIN.

HE had not long to wait. Another gate in the palace opened, and there came out old Asgeld, with a company of Loki's priests, wearing black robes with strange devices on them in red, among which I recognized the tongues of fire, Loki being the fire-god.

They halted in military formation not far away, and then out of his tent came Harald, now in robes also, surrounded by a small company of his Danes, but unarmored. And when he had taken up his stand the multitude, which had evidently been held back till then, swarmed forward.

Then Asgeld came toward us, and with a bow that had in it something of irony, addressed us.

"Hail, strangers!" he pronounced. "This morn we shall see whether ye be, in truth they, one of whom shall pull the sword of Odin from its sheath in Loki's temple.

"And if one of ye in very truth be he, doubtless he shall rule over this land and this city of Rangarok the Mighty, which must first fall into ruins, in accordance with the prediction. Therefore, let us delay no longer, but proceed to Loki's temple, and there put this matter to the test."

As he ceased speaking I saw two trumpeters advance from where King Harald stood. They blew a blast, and immediately the multitude began to go to the temple.

Asgeld motioned to us to remain where we were; his priests formed a square about us, and King Harald advanced, surrounded by his men.

He was the kingliest-looking man that I had ever seen. Six feet five, perhaps, and a little shorter than his retainers, but built like a rock, and, in spite of his middle age, with thews of iron.

As he passed his keen, blue eyes sought our faces. They lit first upon Bjorn, and I saw a slight contempt curl the corners of Harald's mouth

They passed to mine, and passed away swiftly. King Harald took me for what I was; he was not even contemptuous.

But when he saw Ralph a little smile came upon his face, not of scorn, but of approval, as if he saw in him a foe worthy of his prowess.

For a moment the two men faced each other. Then Harald, with a little whisper to one of his followers, had passed, and Asgeld signed to us to accompany the priests.

On we went, through the silent multitude, until, following in the wake of Harald, we reached a flight of steps carved in the black rock on which the temple stood. I perceived that, though it looked hard as granite from a distance, it was in reality tufa, or porous lava of volcanic origin.

The whole of the mighty peak was then of volcanic birth. And it was the memory, doubtless, of some prehistoric eruption which had created it, that remained in the ascription of the building of Rangarok to the Trolls or gods.

The white, round temple loomed above us, built of great blocks of hewn marble, fitted without mortar. We passed in at the entrance, a simple oblong in the mass, unornamented, and found ourselves ranged among our guards inside.

Not very large, and lit dimly by the light which filtered through slits in the walls, the building was striking in its simplicity.

The colored robes of Harald's followers, the black and red gowns of the priests were brilliant spots of color against the white of the interior walls.

In the center was a round altar, perhaps a dozen feet in diameter, looking like a huge baptismal-font, and built up above a great mass of rock, some ten feet high, carved into circular steps with a sort of premeditated crudeness that left the irregular outlines of the mass unhewn between the successive stairs.

At the top of this were perched two gigantic figures, carved out of the original mass in such a way that they formed part of the natural structure.

One was the god Odin, the other Loki. They leaned toward each other across the trough, the face of Odin majestic in its calmness, but that of the fire-god Loki wearing a jeering smile.

And with hands clasped high above their heads, the guardians of that infernal place seemed to await us.

Suddenly old Asgeld leaped forward and, taking his stand before the altar, began an invocation. The archaic words, which were probably not understood by any one there, were incomprehensible to me, but I saw from his frantic gestures that they boded no good for us.

And as he chanted and swayed, I felt the excitement of the scene begin to possess the crowd within the temple—all Danes, and therefore inimical toward us

I felt a tenseness in the atmosphere, I saw the looks of all fixed upon us And just as I myself had begun to catch the contagion of the scene Asgeld ceased.

"Come hither, O strangers," he said "and see if ye can pluck forth Odin's sword from the sheath in which he placed it. And if ye can, assuredly ye shall rule over this land and city."

Here Harald turned his face toward us, and I saw a sneering smile again curve his lips.

At Asgeld's invitation we ascended the stone steps until we stood upon a circular platform immediately surrounding the altar. And now my previous theory of the volcanic origin of the peak was confirmed.

For what I had taken for a flat-topped altar was a deep, circular well; and, looking down I saw, an infinite distance beneath, the pale, lambent glow of a subterranean fire.

It was a volcanic fire, and the cause of Loki's worship in that place.

Looking upward again, I perceived that between the two guardian gods was a flat, circular stone lid to the altar, hung on an enormous hinge, and lifted back, as one might lift back the top of a wicker basket.

And then, above the gods, something gradually came into vision which gave me the clue to Asgeld's obscure hints of the third choice, made on the way into Rangarok.

The upraised hands supported a slender pillar of bronze, above which was an enormous circular basket of wickerwork. Between the clasped fingers of the gods I saw a knob of metal.

It was the principle of the umbrella, oddly incongruous in such a scene and place, for I saw that, by pressure upon the knob, a catch would be released that would bring the basket—and its occupants—down upon the altar-top.

It was the human sacrifice to Loki; and this was the third choice, if we could neither pull the sword nor defeat Harald in the tourney.

I glanced at Ralph and saw the sudden horror on his face as he grasped the principle of this fiendish mechanism. My own must have blanched, too; and yet, suddenly I perceived something that set me wondering.

I had thought at first that the basket would fall down the well of the altar into the flames beneath. But the basket was too large for the altar.

It would merely come to rest on top of the circular walls, where no breath of fire from the subterranean flames could scorch it.

"Come hither, O strangers!" chanted old Asgeld, moving round the altar, and beckoning to us.

We had ascended on the side opposite that on which Harald was standing. As we moved round I saw that the steps, which I had thought formed a complete circle around the rock, left a gap of about three feet in their circumference.

Here was a great slab of rock, uncarved, having a deep fissure running down its entire length. Following this with my eyes, I saw that it seemed to be a cleft in the base of the peak itself, for the crack extended all across the stone floor of the temple, easily traced, although attempts seemed to have been made to cover it with cement.

It was a crack in the volcanic cone thrown up by some eruption, the place through which the infernal fires would leap up when next they were roused into activity.

But all these thoughts passed through my brain in a flash and were forgotten. For in the heart of the fissure, deep to the hilt, I saw a mighty sword of rusted bronze.

It was a sword that only a giant could have wielded, and the hilt was two-handed. And there it stuck in the cleft, seemingly as immovable as the solid rock itself.

"Put your hands to the sword, O strangers, and see if ye can draw Odin's sword from its sheath," came Asgeld's mocking voice.

And because I did not want my own feeble efforts, coming after Ralph's obviously vain ones, to appear an anticlimax, having thrown off my robes, I stepped forward and placed my hands upon the hilt.

As I did so a sudden hush came upon the whispering multitude.

I looked down for a moment into Harald's face, and I saw that, for all his jeering look, he was stirred and uneasy at the memory of the old superstition.

And standing there with my arms bare and seeing the very respectable muscle that had begun to develop on me under the influence of the outdoor life, I began to acquire a respect for myself that seemed, in that instant, to change my outlook upon life. With a valiant rashness I set my hands upon the hilt and pulled.

(To Be Continued NEXT WEEK.)

ABEGWEIT.

(Abegweit is the Indian name of Prince Edward Island.)

BY B. A. L. GREGOR.

I CAN see the whitecaps dashing,
And the ripples dancing, flashing;
I can smell the kelp and seaweed,
For the wind is off the shore;
Out at sea white sails are flowing,
In my face the salt air blowing.
I am dreaming of the sand-hills,
I am home again once more.

By the southern waters roaming,
I have seen the billows foaming,
And have felt the softer breezes,
Flower-scented, blowing free;
There no heavy clouds are darkling
To obscure the water's sparkling,
And the clear sky is reflected
In the blueness of the sea.

But thy magic all together,
Sunshine, roses, cloudless weather,
Never can throw such a glamour
As my childhood's home on me;
For my dearest recollection,
And my deepest heart's affection,
To thy bright red earth is given,
Dear green isle beside the sea.

IN THE DEVIL'S OWN COIN.

BY HENRY LEVERAGE.

Hun Frightfulness Gets a Shock When Fritz Breaks Through "Brass Top's" Line.

MUCH that is different has come out of India. Bilboa was a wizen dwarf with a pot belly at feeding time and a pair of spidery legs, which were tireless and crafty with hillman's lore.

His hair was a glistening mop. His teeth were staggered and sharp.

His eyes had changed over the years from black to a lack-luster yellowishness. They were the eyes of a serpent or a cripple—alert for danger or a thrusting blow.

Bilboa served one master well. He had followed Sahib Brooke through the seasons of an Indian campaign when the village people of the plains had revolted through subtle suggestions out of the north which most everybody said were Russians, but which Sahib Brooke declared had been inspired by Germans.

Sahib Brooke, major, K. C. B., and "Brass Top" to the rank and file of the little brown hillmen who had crossed the oceans to join the fight of fights, was Indian-born and of the family Brooke, who had carved its name high in the wall of great adventure.

A Brooke and a raja sat upon an island throne. A Brooke was with Beatty in the grand fleet which had driven the Germans into the harbors of Kiel and Wilhelmshaven. A Sir Redaver Brooke lay buried in a Picardy graveyard

Bilboa's world was lighted by Sahib Brooke's smile and darkened at his frown. Unlike Ben Bolt, however, Bilboa never trembled. He was a hillman. A hillman in a regiment of "Wuddars," or rat-eaters, held high his head.

It was an honor to serve a Brooke. Ethnologists have stated that hillmen of India are Pre-Aryan. Sahib Brooke called them cattle-stealers, and let the matter rest at that.

He had first met with Bilboa while on a hunt where the jungle meets the hills in a northern region of ravines and half-developed vegetation.

Bilboa had tackled a tiger with a blowpipe. The tawny cat, after Sahib Brooke had crossed the hairs of his telescopic-sight at a range of sixteen hundred yards, had proved to be somewhat swollen from Bilboa's darts.

The hillman was carried in a stretcher to a camp far down on the hills, and there nursed to life by a Bhil boy who had received his instruction from the *sahib*.

Bilboa had never forgotten the long shot from the express rifle. It had most certainly saved his miserable life. It had thrown him in contact with one of the rulers of India who had deigned to notice a worm within his ken.

This contact consisted—after Bilboa had mended sufficiently to salaam to the dust of Sahib Brooke's feet—in grooming an Indian pony, fetching and carrying queer, white letters, upon which were lines of bugs that men read, each to the other, and worshiping the law and order of two thousand brown men who marched in double-step to a rattling command.

A dog loved his master no fonder than Bilboa loved Brass Top. Had the great white *sahib* not saved his life? Had he not seen to it that the tiger scratches were sewed up with silk? Had it not come to pass that a waif of the hills and the jungle places was now chief messenger to a leader of many men in a land where soldiers fought with strange weapons?

Was not this sufficient to make him a slave for all time? There were many leaders with much gold and braid in Picardy, but Bilboa, the hillman, saw only one *sahib*.

"The savage blacks," according to Captain Paddy, who was Sahib Brooke's subaltern, "hate deeper and stick longer than any people I know."

Captain Paddy had dropped this remark at mess. It was in reference to Bilboa. The little orderly, with his squinted face and ragtag uniform, followed Brass Top like a shadow follows a cloud

Bilboa was well hated by the rest of the outfit. He had no education. He was stupid, at times, to the point of a thrashing. His mastery of English was limited to a very few words and many gestures.

He was a wanderer who had been cast out by the criminal tribes. He was never meant to be joined to a regiment of brown men whose quick step and covering stride would be compared only to the Japanese.

Armentières, where the Fifth Wudders were dug in, was a thorn in the Prussians' side. It pointed like an assagai toward Lille.

Brass Top had taken over a ruined château, where he reared and bellowed his orders and generally acted in a manner to impress the Indian troops with his strength and his far-sightedness. These troops, with Canadians on the right flank and Australians on the left, had orders from the general staff to hold Armentières at any cost.

The Hun, to the number of thirty divisions, had struck toward Amiens. The Kaiser's butcher-bill was mounting to the breaking strain.

Also, for it was war, many of the best blood of England had been carried back to cross-dotted graveyards in the safer zones.

Bilboa had seen men starve in the famines of India. He had been present at one massacre, at least. Death to him was the glorious adventure where life started and this world ended.

It was fanaticism, and ingrained. Hillmen of the territorials were rated ninety per cent troops. That is, they never broke and turned from an enemy. They, too, were fanatics.

Brass Top had other orderlies than Bilboa. One was a cockney, who always answered to the name "Harry By." He was "an 'ostler" and the bright, particular aversion to the entire staff, including Bilboa.

It was Harry By who passed his time in mimicking the little hillman. Bilboa loved animals. The two chargers in the stable at the rear of the château, the monkey Captain Paddy had brought from Delhi, a litter of dogs which had been given to Bess, the collie, were all that Bilboa ever saw to cherish in that desolation of death and shell-holes.

Harry By had driven the hillman from the stable more than once. He did not understand the native's deep-rooted feeling for animals. He could not fathom Bilboa wishing to bunk in beside the collie when there were cots at the château.

Also, for Harry By was a wit, there was rumor that Bilboa was part animal and that he was known to bark and snarl at times. This rumor had been circulated by Harry By as one of the after-mess stories given to tan-faced men in the Canadian dugouts.

Bilboa was forever lost in Harry By's mind on the early evening when the Germans, to the number of six divisions, started to take Armentières.

The sun had rimmed the western world as a brass shield sinking beneath a haze of yellow and purple glory. The roar of the drive toward Amiens could be distinctly heard to the south.

Above this roar, for Harry By was feeding the major's horses, there sounded the thin red note of a pipe playing in the abandoned stall occupied by Bess and her litter.

Harry By lowered the bayonet which he used in place of a pitchfork and closed one eye as he swung toward the wild piping.

"Gol blyme!" he declared, for he was cockney. "Now, may I bleed pink if I call that music to charm a soul in this blooming spot."

Dropping the bayonet close to the heels of a gray waller, Harry By tiptoed out upon the shattered flooring of the stable, shot a shrewd glance at the broken windows to the west, where the last light of day was dying, then started with a cunning step for the manger, wherein Bess nursed her litter of collies.

"Hit's that 'eathen," he said to himself. "Hit's that aborigine an' 'is flute. Every time 'e plays it, somethin' 'orrible 'appens.

"Last time was th' bomb th' 'Uns dropped hon the major's motor-car. Time before that hit was th' bleedin' battle of Fresnoy. 'E's a piper of fate, 'e is."

Harry By had reached the deeper gloom of the ancient stable as he finished his silent anathema. He dropped to his knees, listened with ear cocked sidewise, heard the wailing notes of a reed instrument rise and fall, tremble and continue, then pressed his head forward and peered within the dark of the great manger.

Bilboa sat there upon a bucket. The hillman's elbows were crooked like two sharp bones. Within the savage's tiny, wrinkled hands a flute was held.

Fingers played on this, knuckles bent as leathern cheeks puffed and constricted like the hood of some venomous serpent.

"Hit's 'im," thought Harry By. "I've a mind to wham 'im with a trench-spade. 'E's bringin' th' 'Un down on us with 'is piping."

A low growl greeted Harry By's attempt to creep closer up to Bilboa. The collie had scented the presence of a common enemy.

The litter stirred into helpless action. They crawled away from Bilboa's bare feet. They sought their mother.

The music ceased with a sharp stop.

Bilboa darted a pair of yellowish eyes in Harry By's direction. These eyes changed to green specks of livid fire as the savage rose, upsetting the bucket, and backed into one corner of the stall like an animal at bay.

A sharp hissing vibrated the air. The flute was lowered and pressed into a snake-skin bag, which was tied to Bilboa's belt. The tiny hand, however, remained within the puckered mouth of the bag, as if it hesitated to withdraw a lethel weapon.

"So hit's you?" sneered Harry By as he stood erect and squared his shoulders. "Hit's you, you rat-eatin' pygmy. I'll 'ave you know this is my billet, you rotter.

"Wot right 'ave you got a callin' down calamity? Ain't we got troubles enough without your flute. Every bleedin' time you play it—somethin' 'appens."

Bilboa remained silent. He had drawn back slightly under the torrent of the hostler's words

His tiny frame, pressed against the stone of the stable, grew rigid. His eyes slit-lidded as his hand dipped deeper within the snake-skin bag.

"'Old on!" screamed Harry By. "'Old on, you serpent of India! Threatened me—you did! Get your 'and out of that bag!

"I ain't takin' no chances with a Pathan. I'll fight you fair, but I don't—"

The collie growled a warning. Harry By, very much on the alert, construed this to mean that Bilboa was about to strike with a knife.

He crouched, clenched his fists, and half crossed the manger in a professional glide with both feet dancing upon the wood flooring

"Get 'em up!" he blurted. "Get your darbies in front of you. I'm going to polish you I am.

"I ain't going to stand for a heathen a threatenin' a white man! I ain't!"

A rolling tornado of shell-fire broke through the silence of the stable. The ancient sashes clattered. The dust fell in a webby cloud from the dark rafters. The horses stirred uneasily.

A shell struck close to the château. A second racked the air overhead and shattered the night with a noise like a window-blind going up.

Other shells woofed. The put-put of a machine gun deepened into a rattle like a death's threat.

"There you are!" shouted Harry By. "You've gone an' done it with your snake music. Hit's a 'Un drive!

"I'll fix you for it. Get your 'and out of that bag!"

Bilboa drew his deformed body into a smaller space. He raised a skinny arm toward his mouth. His fingers closed over an object in the snake-skin bag.

Harry By, with shoulder drawn back for a crushing blow that would smash the hillman to the floor, hesitated. There was that in the little, wizen ape before him which called for supreme caution.

The green of the eyes which were fastened upon his own, was serpent-darting and

venomous. They glazed over with a transparent sheath.

The hand was slowly coming out of the bag.

Harry By had forgotten the collie. A snarl and then a low growl caused him to glance down.

Bess was defending the hillman. She had crept forward from her pups. Her feet inched over the planks.

It was a flank attack. Harry By stepped to one side, crooked his elbow with a loose-swinging motion, and measured the distance to the brown man's jaw.

Hurricane fire from the German heavies was followed by a typhoon of bursting shells which rained down upon Armentières with a purpose known only to the Hun.

They spattered the streets and houses. They fringed the outskirts and the low lands. They burned the night with their bursts of yellowish fire — mephitic and deadly.

The interior of the stable flashed with orange light, which brought out each detail of the manger. Between flashes a darkness flickered as upon a cinematoscope's screen.

Bilboa had half drawn an object from his long snake-skin bag. He hissed a new warning.

Harry By allowed a curse to drop from his loose lips as a form strode through the open door of the stable, clicked a pair of heels, and hurried in the direction of the manger.

It was Brass Top, the major of the Fifth Wuddars. Bilboa shrank into the corner of the stall as Harry By rounded and attempted a stiff salute.

The *sahib's* eyes were living coals of fire. His mustache bristled. He dashed the hostler aside with a sweep of his powerful arm.

He had seen the hillman's hand within the bag. He had guessed what had just passed between the two orderlies.

"Drop it!" he bellowed. "Down, dog of a Bhil! Don't use that thing again! Come here!"

Bilboa whined and groveled at the *sahib's* feet. His tiny body grew grotesque and pitiful.

"Strike me not, *sahib*," he pleaded. "I but would save my own. The white swine of horrible curses, thou knowest, is mad. I swear it, *sahib!*"

"And you would slay him?"

The major wheeled upon Harry By.

"Have a care, you!" he exclaimed. "Damn it! Why are you always fighting? Are there not enough Huns to wet your thirst upon?

"Do you hear them pounding with their heavies? They will attack soon. Back with the horses and my waller to Lys or Aire!

"Clear out—you! This is no time for childish things!"

Bilboa, who had followed the *sahib* from the hills of India, knew when his master was aroused. He touched his head to the ground, wormed his way out from the manger, and stood erect upon his thin legs, for all the world a black toad in the gloom of the stable.

It was Captain Paddy who greeted the major at the rear of the château. A puzzled wrinkle was on the subaltern's brow.

He glanced over the broad shoulders of the C. O. and shot a quick dart at Bilboa, who had followed the major.

"Glad you came!" exclaimed the captain, mopping his red face with his khaki sleeve.

"Orders in from all over, major. Tried to find you at the Hôtel de Ville.

"Cosgrove phoned to hold on to the last man. Huns attacking with at least five divisions. They're held up at the cemetery. These shells are all gas."

The captain waved a wide arm toward the ruins of the town. He touched his mask suggestively.

"All gas," he repeated, hooking his arm under the major's. "We're going to be deluged. I wouldn't give much for our chances if the wind rises. The ground is reeking, y' know!"

Bilboa understood part of the captain's conversation. He put together the rest in his own way. The low caste barbarians were flooding the village with great cans of venom, which swirled and floated and wreathed like mists in the fever-time of India.

It needed but a north wind to waif the creeping death up into men's lungs. This

method of warfare was new to the Fifth Wuddars

Bilboa, falling in behind the *sahib* and the subaltern, decided there would be much to attend to that night. The major's stride had quickened to a double-step.

The château's grounds were guarded with silent sentries, who stood at attention as the *sahib* glanced keenly into their set faces. He paused on the threshold of a ruined door and sniffed the air as he turned toward the south and the answering light of the British heavies along the Lys.

Now and then a gas-shell struck amid the trees of the forest which fringed the château's western view. They burst with green and yellow geysers.

"Not meant to kill!" said the major fiercely. "Only meant to soak the ground and the pools from the last rains. We'll be in torture within an hour."

Bilboa took this statement to mean that the low-caste barbarians first would make mad, then destroy the troops opposed to them

He wanted them to come on in the fighting-line of brave men. He held respect for cold steel and hand to-hand combat.

Gassing, however, was for eaters of swine and dogs. It was never part of the rack and roar and hostile shouts of men torn by emotion and glory.

The one huge room of the château, wherein the major had his headquarters, was shade-lighted from a few flickering candles. Under these wicks men were bent, studying maps and yellow tissues.

At one end of the room, where the broken windows were barricaded with tables and trench-props, a switchboard stood with its plugs and a cockney operator.

Bilboa, gliding to his position within a shadow, saw the *sahib* stride to this place where men talked over wires, and snap a score of orders to the Fifth Wuddars, who were holding the southern wall of the cemetery.

The hillman recognized that these orders were to the natives, for little Quin was mentioned, as well as two captains who had been with the Indian regiment ever since Bilboa could remember

The *sahib* came back over the room of shadows and dropped into his chair by the side of Captain Paddy's map, which Bilboa knew was filled with different colored pins, all in rows and ranks like toy soldiers. He watched, as he crouched for orders, the two heads scanning his map of the sector.

They were planning some ambush for the barbarians. They smiled into each other's faces as they both rose.

Bilboa knew that the *sahib's* smile was a rare thing. It portended much for the Wuddars on that night.

Close-bitten orders dropped from Captain Paddy's lips as he strode to the switchboard and leaned over the cockney. A squad of natives swung to attention at the rear of the château.

The major addressed their sergeant and gave him instructions concerning certain boxes which were to be taken to the main road leading north of Armentières and close behind the cemetery.

Other squads marched off into the night with the quick step of stern duty. Bilboa caught the *sahib's* eye. He limped to attention.

His wizen face was almost pathetic as the major dismissed him with a jerk toward the shadow from out of which he had risen.

The rumbling lid of hell over which they were located began to rock and assert the hate of the barbarians.

Shells came closer to the château. One struck at the stables.

A droning sounded overhead. It was a Gotha plane on a night flight. Its motor died to a low echo.

Bilboa stirred uneasily. Other planes crossed the château grounds, going northward. Gas was in the air. A yellowish haze hovered about the flickering candles.

Bells, like upon some sunken bar, tolled their warning. But always, to Bilboa, the shells which racked the earth and gave it no rest were the danger. And—this is a thing he had learned about war—the danger did not lie in the chlorin gas. It was in the vapors which no man could see.

For, had not the *sahib* declared that a cholera lurked in those vapors, which would be stirred up by the first breeze. It was for this reason that the *sahib* was mining the roads about Armentières!

The town would have to be given up if the wind blew from the north or the east or the west. Grim end, to the number of countless thousand lives, was in that gas. Its silence was like a great plague that brooded and waited its hour.

The major gave the order to his staff to put on masks as a breeze flickered the candles and swayed the coverings to the broken windows upon the northern face of the château.

A wisp of yellow crept over the door-sill and curled along the floor. It was followed by a lining of green that scummed the walls and floated upward.

Bilboa climbed upon a wrecked buffet, where stood a Lewis gun ready to sweep the château's grounds to the westward

The deep-green lighted to a pea color. The room was filled with an ultramarine incandescence through which eyes glowed from out of gas-masks like diver's eyes in a sand-locked hulk.

A fusillade from an enfilading fire to the eastward rattled the ancient rafters of the room. Heavy booming churned the air. Shouts and lurid oaths came from the cemetery, where the Fifth Wuddars were making a gallant stand.

The Germans, detecting the breeze which had sprung up, and knowing the gas hung low over Armentières, were charging the native troops in triple ranks like waves upon a hostile shore.

Bilboa watched the major.

In his dull way the gas attack was a personal thing. It was not war. It was the hellish thought of a tribe of arch fiends.

And these low-caste whites were battering against the men of India with every devise of hate.

They came on in shouting ranks, crazed with rum and ether. They stabbed the night with their flame-projectors. They gained a salient with shock troops.

The *sahib* glanced to left and right, through his great goggles. He shouted with bull-voice into the telephone-transmitter. He thrust the cockney aside and jammed the microphone-receiver to his ears.

"Hold to the last man!" he ordered. "You, Quin, and your bully boys have got to hold. The Canadians are coming!"

The *sahib* rose from the switchboard and joined Captain Paddy at a north window. They stared out over the wide expanse of the estate to where the gray wall of the cemetery was buried under the hail of German rum-pots, honey-jars, hair-brushes, grenades, and trench-bombs.

The line of this defense was a long sheet of fire.

Bilboa saw the *sahib* wheel and search under the green vapors of the room. An orderly lay sprawled behind a sheet of boiler-iron. A corporal was doubled into a twisted knot and beating the floor in the last agony of gas-poisoning.

The cockney at the switchboard had dropped his head over the red plug. He, too, was gassed in that pit of green.

"Bilboa!"

The *sahib's* voice sounded far away.

The hillman crawled to the edge of the buffet, thrust over a leg, and then dropped to the floor.

"Bilboa!" bellowed the *sahib* as the native rose to a stiff attention and saluted. "Get you to Quin and tell him to hold fast. Tell him to hold! Damn it, he's got to hold in this *shikar!*"

The hillman was off like a broken dog who would do his best. "*Shikar,*" from the great *sahib's* lips behind the mask, was a personal appeal.

It brought the hillman back to India and the day of the tiger. This was on his mind when he found Quin, bleeding and defiant—cursing the Hun in that wrecked shambles against which the enginery of Satan's own children beat like a fist of mail.

"*Sahib,* he say," whimpered Bilboa. "He say 'great leader of many men, hold fast!' I go now to tell my master it is done."

"Go tell him—" started Quin with a bloody twist to his mouth. "Go tell him we were many and now we are few. I—"

Quin's voice trailed into a grit of strong teeth. The Huns were advancing to join their company that had driven the wedge in the salient of the wall.

Three rows of gray-clad soldiers who were charging, with the irresistible force of numbers, broke through the vapors of the night, vanished, then reappeared as the star-shells

appeared overhead and the shambles before the thin, khaki line came out to hasten Bilboa's steps toward the château.

He paused at the doorway, pressed his wrinkled hand to his side, glanced back once and heard, as he entered, the clash of steel meeting steel, and the loud shouts of the Wudders who had come to grips with the barbarians.

"*Sahib*," said Bilboa as he glided through the room and up to the major's side. "*Sahib*, your little children are wild and foolish. They have been broken by the low caste of the north."

Bilboa spoke the truth. The major dashed his mask from his red face and drew his automatic revolver from its holster on his hip.

The fact had stung. He strode to the window, where Captain Paddy was watching the last stand of the Fifth Wuddars.

Bilboa grasped his snake-skin bag, then sank into a corner with his hands before his face. His head racked and swirled.

Perhaps it was the gas that finished him for the time. He had a confused and childish memory of hearing the Wuddars retreating in a line that extended west and east from the château.

He heard Quin's voice roaring a stout defiance. Then, and in a dull maze of many things unexplainable, he left the fight as the first of the barbarian horde flowed like a tide about the stout walls of the château.

"My word, they've rushed us!" said Captain Paddy to the major.

These were the subaltern's last words. Soon afterward he was fighting grimly as helmeted figures swarmed in through the doorway of the château and started mopping up.

Captain Paddy's automatic was cleared of its third clip of cartridges when he went down before the blinding flare of a hand grenade. The major, backed to the gloom by the telephone-switchboard, fought with a bull's strength until, covered with gashes and overpowered by numbers, he was pressed flat upon the blood-soaked floor.

Order came out of chaos with the snapping of sharp commands from a lean lieutenant who climbed through a window to avoid the gas. He it was who motioned for his moppers and sappers to spare the major's life.

"*Acht nehmen!*" he shouted. *Achtung!* We will use the *Engländer* for a good purpose!"

Cold-bloodedly, the spectacled lieutenant went the rounds of the château room as the major was bound with cords and rolled over on his face. Bilboa coiled into a silent knot, received a kick from a polished boot, which was drawn back again for the slightest sign of life.

The lieutenant turned away satisfied that the black was dead. He strode to the doorway of the room, glanced out, and called for his commanding officer.

A burly German, with a row of medals upon his field-gray uniform, loomed through the gloom and took the lieutenant's salute.

"*Wo ist das Hauptquartier?*" he grunted with a savage twist at his Kaiser mustache.

"Here, *generalmajor*," answered the lieutenant, motioning toward the switchboard. "The swine of English birth over there is still living. I think we torture—what?"

"Was he leader of the colored English?"

"Ya, *generalmajor!*"

"Then we torture to the quick! They have dug in by the stables, in great strength. I shall see that this *Engländer* gives the order for a retirement. That will mean another medal, Otto."

The student-lieutenant widened his pale eyes. He saluted, allowed the burly form of the general to squeeze past him, then he followed like a dog after a master.

The German leader wasted no time. The roar and rattle of the attack had died to a grim stalemate in the lower land of the estate.

East and west the Canadians and Australians were standing firm against the Teuton hordes. Only at Armentières had the salient been driven to any distance. This was due to the gas and the overpowering waves of shock troops that had beat against the Wuddars until their line was reformed with the Third Bengals and the Tenth Madras regiment at a new wall beyond the château.

"*Achtung!*" shouted the German general. "Prepare a *flammen*-thrower and a bed for the *Engländer*. He shall roast on a spit!"

The lieutenant gave the order. He lifted his head above the shadows and the yellow gas of the room.

He thrust a soldier out of the way as he plugged in on the field-wires and started speaking in English. The wires were active.

A buzzing was his answer. He repeated the vague request, which was in the nature of a feeler. The code-word or number was in possession of the trussed major of Wuddars on the floor.

It might be possible, however, to get an order through which would be of advantage to the German troops scattered over the cemetery and the estate. A coded demand for a two-mile retirement, supposed to come from the major, would open the way down the valley of the river Lys.

Sahib Brooke nursed no delusion as he pried open his eyes and studied the preparations being made for his death. The German general had leaned from a window, sputtered a score of commands to those outside the château, then had turned with an evil smile on his thick lips.

The shock troops from an infamous Bavarian regiment were overly eager to revenge their losses. They dragged in a flame-projector, set this on the floor in the center of the room, then arranged the sheet-iron plate so its four corners rested upon stools.

Rivet holes were in this plate. It had once been part of a tank. The major had ordered it in the château so as to form a shield for the machine-gunners.

Now the gunners were dead and the shield was to serve for a spit, as the German promised.

"They want *Losung*," sneered the lieutenant as he rose from the switchboard and glared with glazed eyes at the major "What's your pass-word, you swine of an *Engländer?*" he asked.

"Death and damnation to you, sir!" grunted the boiling major.

"Lift him up!"

The mopping squad grinned as they ran their hands under the major's body, raised it, and tossed him through the air, where he landed upon the plate with a thud like a bullock's carcass.

"Tie him with wire. *Gott ist mit uns!*"

The student-lieutenant had all the irony of an inquisitor as he clean-cut his limited English. This was in the nature of a beginning to the torture. The major twisted and squirmed under the double thrust.

"Curs!" he bellowed. "Curs and women ravishers! Is this the way you fight?"

"You shall soon see," said the student. "You will have no mask this time to save you from what is about to come. First, gas, and now the flame, *Engländer* leader of colored savages!"

The major watched the squad make preparations to roast him with the fire-projector. It was a fiendish thing they erected beneath the thin plate of boiler iron—a portable tank in the shape of a knapsack and a long burner, which could be turned at quarter, half, three-quarters or fully open.

Within this knapsack of pressed steel was a bottle of air at high pressure, which drove out the crude oils and flaming material.

The German general strutted about the room. He listened at times to the progress of the fight along the thin, brown British line. It was evident by his corrugated brow and heavy oaths that this struggle was not altogether to his liking

The Wuddars, reenforced and covered at the flanks, were holding up the drive toward the river Lys. They did not know their major had been captured.

A snapper adjusted the nozzle of the flame-projector. He moved the cock to the quarter mark, and struck a match. Flame shot out and under the plate.

Smoke filled the higher corners of the room. Khaki singed and started to burn. The major compressed his lips and glared darkly toward the *generalmajor*.

"Die, *Engländer!*" grunted the German in mocking tones. "*Haben Sie Durst?*" added the lieutenant, imitating his master. "We will give you *vasser* when you send the order to the colored English."

"You b' damned!" blurted the *sahib* with a grim oath. "D'ye know what you are doing you Hun dogs? You're trying to slay a man who wouldn't wipe his shoes on you! Do your worst -curs!"

The lieutenant moved uneasily toward the field-telephone switchboard. The fighting outside was in the nature of a stout countercharge from both flanks.

The air stirred within the room. The blasting cannons rattled the windows and churned weird spirals of yellow gas and oil smoke about the major's twisting form on the spit.

A smoldering hay-rick burst into amber flames and cast a light on the walls. The Canadian artillery found the range of the troops opposed to the Wuddars and lashed them with shrapnel, some of which rained upon the château.

Through it all the major grim-bore the torture. He had resolved to die rather than lift a hand against his own people.

His flesh stank in his own nostrils as the metal sheet turned from dark-red to a bright cherry. The lieutenant glanced at the general. Both shook their heads in unison.

The British were a stubborn race!

"*Gott mit uns!*" declared the general. "The English are strong at times," he added with a twist of his purple neck. "Subbose we turn the flame a liddle higher."

A sapper bent his head in the smoke and moved the cock. The fire-projector roared like a blow-torch. The major's body arched over the hot spot. It bowed like a chip with the heat.

"The code-word? *Der losung?*" demanded the student-lieutenant, leaning over the plate. "*Der—*"

A queer grimace wreathed the German's lips. He wheeled and clapped his hand to his face. His eyes grew large and fearsome as he searched about the gloomy room.

He sniffed the air with a puzzled expression. Then, and as suddenly as a man struck with apoplexy, he spun, threw up his hands and, reelingly, sank to his knees and down to the floor of the room.

He was stone-dead when the general reached his side.

"*Gott mitt uns!*" mocked Sahib Brooke, of India. "He'll finish his burning in hell!"

The German *generalmajor* glared from his lieutenant's body to the *sahib's* unholy face.

"Roast the swine, *Engländer!*" he screamed, pointing to the body on the floor with a thick, red finger. "He brought down this death!"

A rat-eyed member of the shock troops crawled across the floor, shielded his face with his gray arm and turned the cock of the flame-projector another notch.

He backed from the plate. He half rose, then clapped his hand to his neck. It came away with a scarlet spot on his palm.

Curiously he gazed at it, then up into the German commander's purple face.

They both frowned. They studied the deep shadows of the smoke and gas-filled room. The soldier squinted through the open window toward the west.

He felt of his neck. He swayed with wide-spread legs. He went over and down in a pasty mass, as he screamed in South German:

"*Gott! Auf wiedersehen! Der* poison gas!"

"Served you right!" roared the valiant major.

Fear overspread the face of the Hun commander. He backed away from the trussed form on the torture-table.

He turned, with a savage oath, upon his startled troops, some of which had groped their way through the vapors to the doorway.

"*Achtung!*" he ordered, glancing from left to right along their file. "*Achtung!* What is in this room?"

The answer came with startling suddenness. A sergeant pointed toward the lurking form of Bilboa.

He tried to speak. His mouth filled with flecked saliva. He sank down. He raised his head and moved an accusing finger for the second time.

It lowered inch by inch in the swirling smoke which carpeted the floor. Blood was on his neck.

A hoarse bellow of rage thundered from the *generalmajor's* parched throat. He whipped out his automatic and fired at the toadlike hillman.

"How's that, sir?" asked the sergeant-major, twisting his mustache and studying the purple, swollen face of the German below him

"Ouch!" breathed the *sahib* for a second time. "Damn it, go easy with my skin!"

This was to the sapper who was spreading oil and picric over the burns.

"Go easy," he added. "I got some hide left, I hope!"

"You have, sir."

"Then wait."

The *sahib* glanced at the figure of Bilboa, which lay very still. He nudged the sergeant-major.

"Take off your mask," he said as he blinked with dawning understanding. "There's no gas now. The wind has shifted!"

The Canadian whipped off the mask and tested the air with his keen nostrils. Then he waved his hand toward the floor.

"What killed these Germans, sir?" he asked. "They look like poisoned pups. See that big sow's neck—swollen to a sausage."

"Bilboa!" exclaimed the *sahib*. "Bilboa, come here!"

A stir in the corner was followed by the slow rising of the savage. He straightened to attention. A tiny, wrinkled hand went up in silent salute.

The man dropped to the snake-skin bag on his bleeding hip. He sank back, coughed with a queer smile twisting his lip, then fell his last *shikar*.

"He killed them!" declared the *sahib*. "Look closely at that Hun's neck—just under the ear. That dart saved my life!"

The Canadian stooped, drew forth a tiny thorn, and held it out between steady fingers.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Poison dart! Cobra venom! Shot from a blow-gun! You'll find the gun in the hillman's bag. He's one of my Wuddars," he added proudly.

The gun jerked backward in his trembling hand. He fired again as Bilboa moved, and clapped an object to his mouth.

The German lowered his revolver. It turned in his fingers. It dropped with a heavy thud to the floor.

A pasty yellow crept through the purple of his neck. He slapped his ear with a vicious swing.

His face bloated. He stared at the carmine stain upon his fingers.

Blabbering, and with blood turned to water, the brutal Hun commander greeted a higher power with unconscious motion, and sank down across the floor of the room like a pole-axed bullock.

A panic seized the mopping-squad. They crowded within the narrow doorway and ran screaming across the grounds of the château.

They were met with a rallying thrust from Canadian soldiers who had broken through the Bavarian line. A flank attack from the west, driven with the weight of reenforcements, crumpled up the Germans and drove them to the shattered wall of the cemetery.

It was a sortie to rescue the major—to explode the buried boxes along the lines of communications leading into Armentières.

Gas-masked and determined, the Canadians mopped up the ground about the château. Some went on in a skirmish formation—dropping upon the grass at shrill orders from a captain. A whistle sounded its silver-running note.

A resolute sergeant-major, with a bloodshot eye, thrust his head within the room, glanced in all directions, then beckoned for his company of sappers to come on.

They trooped across the threshold and released the *sahib*, who had been saved by the death of the Hun leader. He eyed the dead German commander with an unholy vindictiveness.

He exclaimed "Ouch!" as a stinging bandage was sopped upon the blisters. It was his first acknowledgment of pain.

"By gad, sir!" he told the Canadian officer. "I've an idea that the children of hell got their due in this room, to-night!"

The astonished sergeant-major strode across the floor. He leaned over the body of the hillman.

He reached and drew out, first a flute, and then a bamboo stem through which a tiny hole ran.

Wonderingly he replaced the flute in the bag and stepped up to the Sahib of Wuddars.

"May I keep this, sir?" he asked. "I'm keen about souvenirs and trophies. I got a saw-toothed bayonet and a spiked club and other evidences of Hun kultur.

"Seems to me this goes them one better. It was a good answer to the gas they sent over to-night, major."

"B' jove, it is! Bilboa paid the devil with his own coin!" declared Sahib Brooke.

THE PATHWAY OF ADVENTURE.

BY RANDALL PARRISH,

Author of "When Wilderness Was King," "My Lady of the North," "Contraband," "Shea of the Irish Brigade," "Wolves of the Sea," etc.

A FIVE-PART STORY—PART THREE.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

STUART WAYNE, popular young writer, while driving in a taxicab through Jackson Park, Chicago, saw a beautiful girl and a villainous-looking foreigner in a cab just ahead, and saw a note-book fall from it. He picked it up, and found in it a note from the girl saying that she was held prisoner in a house on the outskirts of the city. She gave its location, and begged the finder to come to her rescue that night, but not to tell the police.

Wayne learned that the house was the old Hartigan home, abandoned since the owner, a gambler, had been killed in a brawl some years before, and his son, Ike, ex-prize fighter and saloon keeper, had been forced to leave town by the police.

That night Wayne saw the foreigner and another man on a trolley-car and followed them. In the dark he heard the sound of a blow, and later saw them drag a man's body into the old house. They left the door open and Wayne entered.

From a place of concealment he overheard a conversation, from which he learned that the girl of the taxi was in the house, and that a crime of some kind, of which she was to be the victim, was planned. He also learned that the others in the house were a Mexican, Juan Almerido, the man Wayne had seen with the girl; Cowan, Almerido's companion on the trolley-car, Steve Groggin, a gangster with more brawn than brain, a woman known as Nell Brennon, and the man they had dragged in.

Wayne went up stairs and found the Brennon woman in a drunken sleep. By her side was a key, with which he opened the door of the girl's room. She told him that she was Zaida Grayson, that she had lived with her father a ranch superintendent, in Mexico, and that he had been killed by a band of Villistas, of whom Almerido was an officer. He had held her prisoner, but for a time had treated her kindly. Then his attitude had changed, and, threatening her with death if she sought help, had taken her to El Paso, where they met Cowan and Nell Brennon. Then they all traveled to Chicago, where Zaida had lived for a time when a child.

They were met by Groggin, and taken to the Hartigan home. There Zaida was visited by a girl, who had scrutinized her closely, and remarked to Nell Brennon: "It's a cinch!"

As Zaida finished her story they were surprised by the gang. In the fight that followed, Wayne was knocked out, and when he recovered his senses found himself in the cellar with another man, who proved to be his old friend, Dan Stiles, of the secret service, who had been watching the gang, and who Wayne had seen carried into the house.

The next day Stiles investigated a munitions-factory fire, and learned that the owner, Patrick Cullom, had been murdered, although it was generally thought that he had been killed in a fall.

That night Wayne was called on the phone by Zaida, who asked him to come to her grandfather's home at once. He went, found Almerido there, and talked with Zaida, who seemed frightened, but who told him that she was convinced that Almerido was acting in her best interests. The girl's grandfather was the murdered munitions-maker.

Wayne called again, and found nobody but Charles, the butler, in the house. He told the writer that Almerido and Zaida had gone South, but that there was a note for him on the desk. While looking for it he was surprised by Cowan. He was trapped again.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIGHT FOR LIFE.

WAYNE straightened up, as startled as if a piece of ice had been dropped down his back, the sudden shock rendering him dumb. He was conscious of Groggin's deft fingers removing the automatic from his pocket, but his own muscles appeared useless and dead.

He stared, dull-eyed, into the faces about him, recognizing them, and realizing how they had accomplished this surprise. Cowan was at his right, a revolver leveled, his evil eyes glaring down the barrel. He had evidently stepped out from behind the draperies.

Groggin had not even entirely emerged,

being able to reach across the edge of the desk to perform his work. Beyond these two, his head cautiously advanced through the opened door leading into the hall, appeared the countenance of Charles.

As Wayne recognized him, a swift comprehension of the fellow's treachery flashing into his mind, the man was thrust unceremoniously aside, and Señor Almerido, his thin lips grinning, strode into the room. He rubbed his hands, plainly delighted at the spectacle of Wayne's utter helplessness, and danced gaily forward to mock his prisoner.

"Ah Señor Wayne, vat a pleasure to so greet you again. You vould have ze speech viz Señorita Grayson—yes? Eet grieve me she be not here; zat she journey south. Perhaps you tell me vat you tell her."

Wayne never moved, never opened his lips, but his brain was clearing from shock, and the hot blood was rushing back into his veins. The Mexican misunderstood the silence.

"I told zem you cum back; zat you vas zat kind. Bah! I know ze Americans like you—a voman always does ze business. Vy ve hunt ven you come to us yourself—hey?"

"Some cute little amateur detective, ain't yer?" broke in Cowan derisively. "All you'd ever detect won't hurt no one—not fer a while, anyhow."

He laughed gruffly in grim humor.

"Say, I read a book o' yours once—a corkin' good detective story it was, too—an' yer guessed that out all right; but ye're a long ways from makin' good on this one. Charlie here wus too darn smart fer yer."

Wayne heard, but paid no heed; one thought had taken possession of his mind and dominated it to the exclusion of all else. It was the conception that these fellows would never dare fire; that their threatening to shoot was a mere bluff which they would never venture to execute.

They were in hiding here, and the neighborhood was so respectable that the sound of a shot would instantly create an alarm. It was a still day, with passers-by on the street just in front of the door, an automobile before the next house, and children playing just around the corner.

This knowledge gripped him with hope, with determination. The fellows would never dare pull trigger—a shot ringing out in that neighborhood would mean disclosure, capture—the puncturing of the whole bubble. They would not take the risk.

He hardened into cool, deliberate purpose, his lips and eyes smiling as he formed a plan of action.

"It rather looks as if you were right, Cowan," he said cheerfully. "I am a bum detective; but at least I know when I have played out my cards. Put down the gun—there is no chance of my getting away, with four of you against me. That's better; it makes me nervous to look into that thing."

He sat back easily upon the open desk, genially pleasant and curious. To all appearances there was no fight in him, only a desire to make matters as pleasant as possible.

"Now that you fellows got me dead to rights, what's the program?"

"Vat you mean—*ze* program?" And Almerido thrust his sharp-visaged face over Cowan's shoulder.

"Why, what do you plan to do with me? I suppose you've figured it all out, for this was a put-up job. Of course the girl never went south; that was all a lie to draw me on—"

"*Si, señor,* she go south, but I no go with her—I stay for zis."

"I'll accept that for what it is worth, my friend, and then discount it liberally. But let that go; what I am particularly interested in at present is my own situation.

"I am in your hands, weaponless"—he extended his arms—"and helpless to escape. I am no fool, and know I am in a bad pickle, and having danced must pay the fiddler. What I am anxious to learn now is the price."

"Vat you zink vud eet be?"

Wayne's eyes ranged across the faces watching him. Cowan appeared amused, the others were sullen and malicious; the teeth of the Mexican gleamed like those of a hungry tiger, and his words snapped out.

The prospect was far from reassuring, but the observer continued to smile genially.

"Not a very merciful-looking bunch," he admitted carelessly, "and no doubt you

feel as kindly toward me as a pack of dogs would toward a treed cat; but I take it that your retain some sense among you. I don't for a moment question what you would prefer doing—but do you dare do it?

"I do not place murder beyond your accomplishments, but I do want to impress on you all that in this case it is not entirely safe

"In the first place, I am rather widely and favorably known. In a few hours at most I would be missed and sought for. In the second place, this house would at once be suspicioned and searched."

Cowan laughed.

"Didn't you suppose we knowed that?" he growled. "An' what wud they find here? Not even a caretaker. This is no hang-out of ours, an' yer friends cud search it to the roof an' back fer all we cared. Don't pull any con on me, cull, fer I'm too old a bird fer that sorter chaff.

"What we do with yer's our own business. Come on, Groggin, we've listened long enough to this rooster crow; he'll lose his spurs soon."

Wayne realized how little he had accomplished, yet that little was all he had hoped for. He had so completely disarmed the suspicions of the men before him as to render them careless; they no longer felt him to be dangerous, but believed he had accepted his fate; that he was a spiritless creature, already begging for mercy.

Cowan had lowered his weapon, and Almerido turned away to give some order to Charles, who remained uncertain in the open doorway leading to the hall. The dim light from the single electric bulb merely outlined the faces, leaving them expressionless.

The young man's hand, concealed beneath a fold of his coat, closed tightly on a heavy paper-weight lying on the desk. It was his only weapon, but he had determined on its use, and was aware that the moment had arrived.

Groggin, with an oath, gripped his left arm, but, jerking from the fellow's grasp, he let fly the missive.

There was a crash of glass, darkness, a roar of rage from Cowan, while Steve, struck by a flying shoulder, went catapulting into a corner as Wayne sprang backward through the draping curtains into the blackness of the room beyond. The action was so swift that if Cowan whipped up his gun he had no conception of where to fire; he could only dash blindly forward, clutching at the darkness.

Wayne struck a table and a chair, overturning the latter with a crash, yet attained the opposite wall before his pursuers had recovered sufficiently to thrust aside the curtains in an effort to overtake him.

He had no knowledge of where to turn in his flight, and knew nothing of the house. He had simply obeyed a mad impulse, a determination to stake life on the possibility of escape. Cowan's voice, like the bellow of a bull, sounded as the fugitive's hand touched the knob of the door.

"The hall, some of yer! Head him off—Groggin; Hartley—strike a light!"

There was the glimmer of a match behind him, but Wayne crashed the door shut, stumbled against the foot of a staircase, and ran silently up the steps, disappearing into the darkness above before the baffled pursuers broke through into the lower hall.

His one purpose now was escape; he cared not how. He heard the howl of the wolves behind, especially the falsetto of Almerido, who had sufficiently recovered to yelp out orders in broken English:

"He go oop ze back stair! You—Cowan, Groggin; see eet vas zar. Vy you not grab heem. *Dios de Dios*, ze fellar have no gun. Queek now—I vill go by ze front vay—so he be caught. Keel him with ze hit on ze head!"

There was daylight above, not much, but a little stealing in through shades not carefully lowered, and rendering visible the interior of various rooms opening off the hall. Wayne had no chance to choose; he must trust to luck; with both stairways guarded, his only remaining hope would be some unfastened window.

He dashed headlong through the first open door, but found neither key nor bolt with which to bar the passage behind him. It was too late to seek refuge elsewhere; Cowan was already half-way up the stairs, cursing and threatening. Wayne, slam-

ming the door in his face, piled against it every article of furniture he could reach, and then desperately sought the windows.

These could be used, yet his heart sank as he looked down; not only was it a sheer drop to a hard cement walk circling the house, but, crouched in the shadow of a concealing bush, he saw Hartley. The ex-chauffeur grinned cheerfully, and a ray of light glittered ominously on a revolver in his right hand.

Wayne might have essayed the drop, daring the chance of a broken limb, but to have done so would have left him even more helpless than he had been before.

There was only one way left—to fight. Cowan's shoulder struck the door, his giant strength forcing the barricade of furniture aside as he heaved and pressed a passage. Wayne had barely time to wheel about, to grip the first weapon at hand, an overturned stool, when the infuriated brute, bellowing with rage, burst into the room, a revolver waved threateningly. Mad and desperate as he was, the fellow paused at sight of Wayne's attitude.

"Now, see yere!" he roared. "What's the use o' yer puttin' up a fight? We got yer, an' if yer don't drop that stool I'll blow a hole clear through yer carcass. I don't want no better fun"

"You are a cheap liar, Cowan," and the voice answering was as cold as ice. "I am going to call your bluff, you big stiff. I dare you to shoot me; you were afraid to do so down-stairs, with every window closed tight—here they are open, and the report of a gun would alarm everybody in the neighborhood. That is the last thing you lads want."

"What do I care?" gruffly, yet uncertain. "You'd never tell about it after I shot, an' there's plenty round yere to clear me."

Wayne smiled grimly, determined to play his hand boldly.

"Because that sort of publicity is the very thing you fellows better avoid just at present. Now, listen to me, you big fool I know your game; I'm on to it, from the time Almerido brought Zaida Grayson out of Mexico, down to the sudden death of Patrick Cullom."

"Is that so?" mockingly. "Well, what good will all that knowledge do yer—dead?

"Hey, Almerido! Come here, you an' Groggin. I've got the guy cornered, an' now he's stallin'. What's that yer said 'bout the death of Cullom?"

"That I knew what caused it."

"Sure; the old feller fell down-stairs. The coroner turned in that verdict; yer don't claim he was croaked, do yer?"

Wayne looked at him, and into the faces of the Mexican and Steve behind in the doorway. Perhaps he had gone far enough, yet it might be well for him to drive his point home, make it absolutely clear that he was not alone engaged in this investigation, and that his death would be avenged.

"He was deliberately murdered," he answered calmly, watching the effect of his words. "And that crime was part of the plan to gain control of his property through the inheritance of the granddaughter."

"Ze pig!" hissed Almerido furiously. *Dios de Dios,* I slit ze dam throat! How you zay ziss ven ze coroner swear ze man fall, an' so was keeled? Who believe you?"

"The coroner failed to notice a slight wound, concealed by his hair, behind the man's ear. Also, he had no knowledge of a peculiar South American poison called curare.

"Now do you believe that I know how Cullom died?"

The three looked at one another in silence, the sallow face of the Mexican ghastly from fright. For the instant he was speechless; then his lips gave utterance to a string of Spanish oaths.

There was murder in the glare of his eyes as he crouched behind Cowan, and Wayne, realizing that his words had struck directly home, stepped backward against the wall, the stool uplifted for defense.

"Hold on there!" he said sternly. "If you attempt to knife me, Almerido, you'll never get out of this town alive; not one of you. I am not working alone!"

"You zay zat! Bah! 'Tis a lie!"

"No, it is no lie—listen! Was I the only man you left behind you in the Hartigan house? Well, you have more occasion to fear that other man than me. He is an officer of the law, the one who studied out

the real cause of Patrick Cullom's mysterious death –"

"What's his name?"

"You'll not learn that from me, Cowan. If Nell Brennon had seen him she would know. But if I do not return, this man will hunt for me—*here!*

"Do you get that? He'll hunt for me *here;* and he will know whom I have been up against."

"Oh, darn your threats! We'll shut your mouth first, and then take care of your bloomin' friend. Come on, Don, Groggin; we're three to one—let's finish him!"

It was some fight, but with Steve Groggin out of it at the first blow. He sprang at Wayne from the left, thinking to dash through his guard, and grapple the throat as in a barroom scuffle, but the latter was sufficiently alert to block the trick, the heavy stool descending with a force that drove the fellow stumbling to the floor, but left only one splintered leg of wood in Wayne's grasp.

The sudden action, however, saved him from contact with the swinging butt of Cowan's revolver, which, instead of smashing in his skull, struck his shoulder a glancing blow, the brute losing his balance, and only keeping from falling by gaining the support of the wall.

Wayne jammed the broken stool-leg full into his chest, and sprang straight at the crouching Almerido, who, with murderous eyes and gleaming knife, barred the way to the open door.

Here was his dangerous antagonist, the one with the silent weapon he dare use, and the will to use it.

But the Mexican was a snake, his tactics those of a coward. Before Wayne's onrush he slipped swiftly back, avoiding the other's grip, protecting himself with the slashing blade, into the darker hallway.

Into Wayne's mind flashed the meaning of this strategy—a chance for the giant Cowan to recover and take him from the rear—and, disregarding the threat of the knife, he leaped straight at the skulker.

The sharp steel cut into arm and chest, but his fingers had the Mexican's throat, as he crushed the fellow against the upper stair-rail. But now Almerido fought like the devil he was; fought as the mongrel fights, using every dirty trick of the assassin –nails, teeth, gouging fingers—in an attempt to break free.

And he possessed strength; his muscles were like steel springs, his methods those of a maddened cat. Wayne sought in vain to force him back over the rail; his legs clung desperately to the posts, although the knife fell clattering onto the steps below

The fight raged for minute, two minutes, the struggle savage as between wild animals; and then Cowan, bellowing like a bull, crashed into them, so infuriated as to be absolutely blind.

His huge bulk crushed them against the rail, which snapped and gave way, the two men toppling forward and plunging headlong down the stairs. Cowan caught himself on the edge, but the others, still gripped together, went over helplessly, landed in a jumbled heap at the bottom, and lay there motionless.

CHAPTER XVI.

BACK FROM THE DEAD.

CONSCIOUSNESS came back to Wayne slowly; nothing really defined itself in his mind, even his memory failed. He felt too weak to move, and for some time possessed not the slightest knowledge as to where he was. Everything was strange and dark.

At first he believed himself blind, but suddenly a red glare of light flashed in, illuminating the roof above where he lay, and passing as swiftly by. But this glimpse, together with the motion of the floor, aroused him to a dim realization of his position—he was in an empty box car which was moving rapidly.

The jar, the roar of the wheels, became clear and distinct. He extended his hand, but touched nothing except the wood floor. He felt weak, giddy, his head throbbed with pain, yet he had braced himself in an effort to sit up when he thought he heard a voice, and again lay absolutely still, listening.

He remembered now what had happened—the trap laid for him in the Cullom house; the desperate attempt to escape;

the fight in the upper hall, and his final plunge with Almerido down those back stairs. These memories did not return all at once, but came little by little as his benumbed brain began to act; yet they served to arouse caution, to hold him quiet.

There was some one talking, a man with a deep, coarse voice, but the car made such a noise that he could scarcely distinguish a word. He heard no one else speak, yet there must be two, or there would be no conversation.

The voice was as harsh as Cowan's, but different; he had never heard it before. Neither man moved, and the darkness shrouded everything.

Who were they? What were they doing there? Did their presence have any connection with his situation? Could they be members of the gang placed on guard over him?

These questions came dully into Wayne's mind, but were unanswerable. They merely served to increase his suspicion, and to hold him motionless. He became aware that he rested in one corner; that his coat had been removed, and now, wadded up as a pillow, supported his head.

The speed of the train slackened a little, the rumble of the wheels became less pronounced, and the voice of the speaker more distinct.

"What place do yer s'pose this is, Dick?"

"Ain't nothin' yere, but we must be pretty clost ter Mendota," returned the other sleepily. "I uster brake on this road."

"Mendota—what's there?"

"Nuthin' much, 'cept a lunch-counter an' railroad crossin'. Why, Bill?"

"'Cause I'm goin' ter get out while the gettin's good—that's why. That guy's a darned sight worse hurt than Ike told us, Dick, an' I don't aim to be caught in this car 'long with a stiff."

"Yer think he's goin' to croak?"

"I ain't so sure he ain't croaked now. When I felt o' him he felt cold—his skin did, an' I couldn't tell fer sure he even breathed. I'm ready ter do a pal a good turn, specially when I'm paid 'nough fer it, but I don't git hanged for nobody's else's job—not me.

"We'll skip at Mendota, or whatever this next jay town is, and let this guy go on alone—he ain't likely to bother nobody."

"Whar'll we go, back to Chi?"

The coarser-voiced man swore.

"Not fer a while. I dunno what this yere is all about, an' there ain't any use gittin' mixed up 'long with Ike Hartigan as I knows of. We got money, an' it's my notion we drift 'long to St. Louie till we git things straight.

"Then, maybe, we kin blow back ter Hooligan's place, an' hold up Ike fer sum more chink. He's got sum rich game on ter spend, the way he is, believe me."

"Is that his hang-out—Hooligan's?"

"Mostly; Tim's one o' the ol' bunch, an' Ike don't know many in town eny more. He's got a dame ter hide somewhere; an' Hooligan can put a skirt out o' sight as slick as anybody. Come on, Dick, beat it—the train's most stopped."

"And leave the guy lyin' yere?"

"Why not?" brutally. "If he ain't a stiff, he will be afore the car's ever opened. That's whut Ike paid us fer, an' I don't want ter be caught in yere with the mutt. Come on; we've got ter crawl out the end door."

Wayne's limbs were painfully cramped from the position in which he lay, but he dared not move a muscle as the two men passed him. The train came to a jerky stop, a voice could be heard calling outside; the car was not up to the station, yet an electric light not far away threw sufficient light through the end window to make plainly visible the movements of the two men.

Their faces were indistinct, unrecognizable, except that one, the heavier individual, wore a beard. He was the first to clamber out through the narrow opening and lower himself to the coupling, where he clung silently until the other joined him.

Neither spoke, nor, apparently, glanced toward the figure of their victim, huddled in the black corner. A little later Wayne, intently listening for the slightest sound, heard the two leap to the ground, and then the shuffle of their feet on the gravel as they hurried away.

He was alone, deserted, left there to die.

Yet no conception of such a miserable ending was in his mind. The hour during which he had been lying there, semiconscious, had thoroughly convinced him that his injuries were not serious.

Exactly what they consisted of he was unable to determine, but already he felt a renewal of life, and a return of strength to both brain and body. He was again thinking clearly, planning for future action, and now, that he was safely alone, began immediately to exercise his muscles in an effort to ascertain the real nature of his injuries.

Apparently his head had suffered most severely, either from his plunge down the stairs, or the blows struck later by the desperate Cowan. The result had been a complete numbing of all his faculties, a comatose condition closely resembling death, and total unconsciousness, probably for hours.

This absolute deadening of the functions of the brain had doubtless affected the circulation of the blood, and hence led to an almost complete cessation of the pulse, causing Bill to believe him a dead man. Even now his limbs seemingly were paralyzed, although the numbness was passing away with the effort to move them, and the strained muscles were beginning to ache and throb.

With set teeth, he struggled desperately to sit up, but the jerk of the train as it once more began progress occurred before he succeeded in accomplishing this result, and they were well out of the yards, rattling across the final switches onto the main line, by the time he attained his feet, clinging to the sill of the window in the endeavor to remain erect.

Standing there, jerked about by the erratic movements of the car, he became aware of his deplorable condition: he retained scarcely enough strength to remain erect; his temples were throbbing with agony, and his hair matted with clotted blood. He felt inexpressibly dirty, and his clothing was in a sadly torn and soiled condition.

Apparently he possessed no hat, at least he could locate none in the darkness. He was weak from hunger, and his lips were parched by thirst. He explored his pockets, only to discover them empty—nothing remained valuable even for identification, excepting a small lodge-pin in the lapel of his coat.

Yet he smiled grimly in the darkness as his mind grasped the full significance of being actually alive, able yet to thwart those villains in the execution of their murderous plans.

He was able now to grasp the situation, and to perceive the way with new clearness. In the very depth of his present misery and defeat he had stumbled onto a clue which might yet bring success—*Hooligan's place.*

Beyond doubt, if, as he judged, this was a well-known resort of thieves, the spot could be identified easily — Stiles might know where it was, or, if he did not, then Dermott or Corcoran would. It could be found, for, in all likelihood, it was not far from the Burlington tracks.

That was why the freight-car had suggested itself to Cowan as the safest method of getting his body out of the city. The ex-pugilist no doubt believed him hurt unto death, and grasped this as the safest means of escaping detection. With some inkling of who Wayne was, his comparative prominence in the city, he knew that his strange disappearance would not pass unnoticed, but an unidentified body, presumably that of a tramp, in a box car, would arouse little interest.

If discovered a long distance away, the probability of the crime being traced back to Chicago would be quite remote. The death would naturally be charged to a fight between hoboes, the body consigned to the potters' field in some far-off town, and the whole affair promptly forgotten.

By sending a crony or two along with the dying man, thus making doubly sure of avoiding danger, the ruffian felt convinced that the young man would never again cross his path.

Beyond doubt this was the explanation of his present situation. From the moment when he had crashed down the back stairs, with Almerido still in his grip, Wayne retained not the slightest memory. All that had occurred until the time of his recover-

ing consciousness in the car remained a complete blank.

Yet he knew the probable story of those intervening hours. Whether or not the Mexican had been seriously injured he could not tell. But he, unquestionably, had been picked up to all appearances dangerously hurt. Cowan must have thought him dying, and become obsessed with the one desire to get him safely out of the way.

To that end he had been carried out the back way, secretly loaded into the Cullom automobile, and driven to this Hooligan resort under cover of night. The proprietor, perhaps unwilling to have the death occur in his establishment, suggested the railroad journey.

Probably this was not the first occasion such a method had been resorted to, and Cowan was glad enough of the suggestion. Wayne remained unconscious, the blow on his head leaving him almost pulseless, and thus, amid the concealing shadows of the night, he had been thrust into a convenient car and sent forth on a journey to death

Well, he was not dead—far from it; but it might serve him well to have Cowan believe that he had met his end No doubt Bill would so report, and as a result the gang would no longer be on guard.

As for his own determination, it had only hardened in purpose, grown more grim and bitter. The fight had become personal.

He could distinguish the swerving of the car as the long train took a side-track and slowed down. There was no flicker of lights indicating a town, but there was a rasping of brakes; a man ran along the roof over his head, and finally with a jerk the train came to a stop.

A voice at some distance shouted something indistinguishable, and then all noise ceased. With considerable effort Wayne succeeded in reaching the sill of the window, where he could look out between the cars.

It was still night, yet there was a slight glow of dawn in the east, barely sufficient to make dimly visible near-by objects. To the left arose the steep incline of a cut, shutting off all further view, but to the right lay the two parallel main tracks, and, clearly outlined against the sky, appeared the ugly framework of a shed. Overhead the stars twinkled, and no sound disturbed the silence.

Evidently the freight had been run in on a side track, yet it could not be far distant from a town. Anxious to escape unseen, Wayne lowered himself to the ground on the side of the bank.

Crouched in the shadow, and convinced that no trainmen were in sight, he ventured to clamber up the side of the sharp cut.

From the summit he obtained a fair view ahead, marking the curving length of the dark train, and not far distant the glimmer of numerous lamps indicating the presence of a town. Evidently the side track was part of the yard system, for an incandescent light blazed over a wagon-road scarcely a hundred yards away.

Feeling this to be a safer mode of travel, Wayne climbed the railroad fence, and stumbled across a narrow field, until he came out upon the highway. It was well traveled, and he soon came within the radius of the lights, finally debouching upon a cement sidewalk.

As he advanced, meeting no one, the houses all dark, he felt vigor return to his limbs, and a clearer conception of his best course flashed through his mind.

Evidently he was approaching a town of considerable size, a manufacturing city of some importance. Off at his right he read a sign, illuminated by electric lights, announcing a new hotel, one hundred rooms with baths, and this announcement caused him to feel in his empty pockets.

He was hatless, collarless, his clothes in rags, unwashed, a most disreputable object. He stopped to consider what he should do. With no money, no acquaintance in the town, the prospect was far from cheering. Who would believe his story to the extent of advancing cash?

He might beat his way back on a freight it probably was not a great distance—but in the mean while he must eat, and at least procure some head-covering. His eyes noted the lodge-emblem in the buttonhole of his coat. If there chanced to be a member of the order in the place, he could doubtless convince him of his identity, and

obtain assistance. Encouraged by this thought, he plowed on through the gray mist.

A turn brought him to the outskirts of the business district, and on the second corner he encountered a policeman, leaning against a mail-box and idly swinging his night-stick. Evidently the man had heard his approaching steps in the silence, and was waiting to see who was abroad at so early an hour.

At sight of Wayne he stiffened, and when he spoke the sound of his voice was decidedly hostile.

"Well, bo," he said crisply, "you've struck the wrong burg; you better beat it, before I run you in."

"I would rather enjoy being run in at present," answered Wayne.

"Lookin' for lodgin', hey — come now, what's the game?"

Wayne laughed.

"I suppose I do look rather tough, officer," he said. "But that is my misfortune, not my fault. I live in Chicago; my name is Wayne—Stuart Wayne. I presume you never heard of me?"

The policeman's grin broadened; here was a new one

"I sure never did; when did you blow in?"

"I was slugged some time early last evening, and thrown into a freight car," went on Wayne earnestly. "Probably they thought I was killed; look at my head."

"An awful whack, sure," becoming interested. "Was that done in Chi?"

"Yes; I never came to until out yonder on the siding; that's the train pulling in now. What town is this?"

"Kewanee," still suspicious. "Know anybody here?"

"Not a soul."

"That your own coat you're wearing? 'Cause, if it is, I don't see any need of you goin' hungry; that's a Cariboo pin, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, the chief's in that lodge—I ain't; but he'll come down by eight o'clock, an' if you make good the old man 'll treat you square; you better come along with me to the station. I ain't so darned sure you're not lying; but you ain't drunk, and can doze a bit till Kelly gets down."

CHAPTER XVII.

WAYNE CONCEIVES AN IDEA.

KELLY came down-town ahead of time, a big good-natured fellow, with a pair of shrewd, gray eyes, and a jaw betokening belligerency. His interview with Wayne was brief but satisfactory, resulting in a substantial breakfast, an improvement in apparel, and the price of a ticket to Chicago.

The two parted on the station-platform very good friends indeed, and the chief, scenting the battle from afar, would have accompanied his guest to the city, had it been possible. As it was, Wayne departed loaded down with good advice, which he promptly forgot as he curled up in a seat and fell asleep.

By three o'clock, somewhat refreshed, and with plan of action already outlined, he reached his apartments. A bunch of letters lay on his desk, and he paused long enough to run them hastily through his hands. One, from Stiles, he tore open and read. It was brief, evidently a quickly scrawled note, bearing date the evening before:

> Called to Washington; absent week or ten days. Mighty sorry to leave just now, for the Curran case is getting interesting. Have discovered to-day his granddaughter was with him when the fire broke out. This never appeared before the coroner's jury, and she failed to testify. The old man did his banking at the Merchants' Exchange. You are a friend of Bob Carlton's; dig some information out of him. Don't worry about the girl; no matter how desperate they are, they will not dare do her any serious injury until the estate is settled they might need her alive. See Carlton, and then leave the rest until I return.

Wayne sank down into a chair, the note still in his hand, and read it over again. He was in no mood for patience, nor had he faith in the mercy of those fellows. Even if, for purposes of their own, they spared Zaida Grayson's life, her condition remained a miserable one—held prisoner in

some low resort, perhaps submitted to unspeakable indignities, suffering untold mental agony, with death probably her ultimate fate, unless rescue came at the right moment.

His hand, sweeping aside some papers on the desk, revealed the hasty sketch of the girl's face that he had made from memory, and he bent over it eagerly. This was not the mere solving of a mystery of crime in which his interest had been aroused—it was to serve this woman.

No professional instinct rendered him indifferent to the deep personal interest involved. While he would enjoy bringing these villains to book, giving them full punishment for their crime, foiling them in every way, yet the hope which spurred him on was that of rescuing the girl.

Nothing else counted in his mind. She had become more and more a part of his life; he began now, gazing at that rude sketch, to realize dimly how deeply interested he truly was. The face appealed to him; the memory of her gripped his imagination.

Wait ten days, two weeks, for Stiles to return? Leave her in the hands of those ruffians all that time? The thing was unthinkable; he would be an unspeakable cur to desert her to such a fate.

He would seek Bob Carlton that advice was good; if Bob had been Cullom's banker he ought to know the truth. He was one to be trusted, one to keep his own counsel and remain quiet until the right time came.

Moreover, Bob would respond to the other side of the case—the personal side The unhappy situation of the girl would appeal to him.

Realizing that any action was impossible before morning, Wayne sat there smoking for a long while, turning over and over in his mind each separate detail of this strange case, in the solving of which he had become so unexpectedly involved. Unquestionably he was upon the track of penetrat ing its mystery, yet even now it was largely surmise.

Convinced himself as to the guilt of those who were holding the girl captive, the proof of that guilt was still lacking.

Who was directly responsible for the death of Patrick Cullom? And was some one impersonating Zaida Grayson in an endeavor to gain possession of the estate? These two most important questions remained unanswered.

To-morrow he would take steps leading toward the answer; he would first learn the truth about Hooligan's place, and later, after banking-hours, hold private consultation with Carlton. Then he would know better what course to pursue; but to-night he needed a bath and rest.

The final decision relative to the proper Hooligan was more complicated than he had anticipated. The city directory gave seven of that name as engaged in the saloon business, three within the radius immediately surrounding the Burlington tracks.

Unable to decide which was the more likely to be the one sought, he invaded the City Hall and interviewed Corcoran, without giving the latter any specific information as to his object. A drink, however, loosened the detective's tongue.

"Well, let's see; there's more Hooligans in this town than sparrows. West Forty-Second—oh, yes, that's Jim Hooligan's place; he's all right, just a quiet old Irishman, runs a family joint; nobody ever had any trouble with him—he wouldn't harm a fly.

"Western Avenue, you say? Wait till I think; that must be Mike Hooligan's saloon. I arrested Mike once for manslaughter, but he got off. He's a darn good fellow, only hot-headed. Some rowdies hang out there, but nothin' worse—no police-record.

"What is the other one? Oh, yes, Bat Hooligan, over on Canal; he's likely the gink you're after. Bat's an old-timer, and sports a pretty tough gang.

"By the way, if this case has reference to that Ike Hartigan you and Dan Stiles were asking about, it just occurred to me that Bat and old man Hartigan used to sport round together. That's when I first got on the force, back in eighty-one or eighty-two."

"Runs a tough joint, does he?"

"In trouble most of the time; regular thieves' den, but hard to get the goods on him. Saloon's in the basement, but he's

got a lease on the whole building, and there's a way of getting out we ain't on to yet.

"He's a smooth guy, Bat, with a big pull up here. He makes more straw-bailing than he does running a saloon; every dip in town knows him."

"A dangerous place to go to?"

Corcoran rested his hand on Wayne's shoulder, lowering his voice.

"Young fellow, don't you ever try it alone; leastwise not without a gat in your mitt, unless you're going there peaceful. I ain't exactly wise to your game, but you're a friend of Stiles's, and so I'm giving you a bit of advice.

"And that is—let Bat Hooligan be, unless you take a squad of harness bulls along with you. He ain't overly fond of strangers what drop in. Was it, may I ask, your idea that maybe Ike was a hanging out in Bat's joint?"

"I have some reason to believe so."

"It wouldn't be impossible; but don't you go moseying round there alone; 'tain't noways healthy. I know a half-dozen young fellers who hang round there. If I'd pinch one of them he'd squeal; them guys are all yellow. Better try that out first."

"All right, Corcoran," Wayne agreed, impressed by the man's earnestness. "But before I do I want to look around a bit myself make sure I am on the right track, you know."

He started toward the door, but paused at sight of a morning paper lying open on a settee, suddenly impressed with a new thought.

"Have you been reading the news this morning?"

"Sure; nice diamond pull off in Cleveland; looks like Billy Burke was at it again."

"You know him?"

"No, if this was his job, it's his first west of New York. We've got his mug here, and orders to look out for him. He and Bob Howland are in cahoots, but Bob has gone to South America it got too hot for him in Chicago. The only time I was ever in Bat Hooligan's place I was looking for Bob."

"He hung out there?"

"I ain't sure; Bat is too darn slick to get caught with the goods, but the chief thinks he's the fence for some of them big boys. Anyhow, I didn't spot anything wrong; then the next we knew Bob was out of the country."

"But Hooligan knew him? Had dealings with him?"

"Sure; there's no doubt of that."

"And this other fellow, Burke, are they acquainted also?"

"They might be, but so far as I know Burke was never in Chicago, and I don't believe Bat has been out of his joint three hours at a time in ten years. Course they're likely hep to each other."

"What's this Billy Burke look like?"

"Oh, about your size and weight; light hair and gray eyes, anywhere from twenty-five to thirty years old. Some dresser, they tell me. Come over to the office and I'll show you his picture."

In a side room of the office Corcoran swung the leaves of a photograph-cabinet until his blunt forefinger rested on the photograph of a young man bending over a desk.

"That's him," he said, rather glumly. "Just a snap-shot; the New York police never held him long enough to mug him proper."

"And he's never been in Chicago?"

"Well, course I can't say as to that, Mr. Wayne; but he ain't never done no work here. What are you aiming at?" suspiciously. "Pretending to be Billy Burke, and so get a stand-in with Bat Hooligan?"

"Do you suppose it could be done?"

Corcoran shook his head, lighting a fresh cigar.

"It would be a deuce of a risky job," he said slowly and doubtfully. "For even if old Bat never seen Billy, he ain't no darn fool, and would put you through one awful examination.

"Maybe you could work the racket; you are educated and smart; and if you've got the nerve maybe you could fool Hooligan, but I wouldn't want to give you no life insurance while you was trying it.

"You better let me go pump some of those young guys what hang round there—they'll cough up, all right."

Wayne left him, however, unconvinced, and rather fascinated by this new idea. He had been struck by a peculiar resemblance to himself in Burke's picture -a pose of the head, a similarity of feature outline—so noticeable as to be almost startling.

To be sure, this resemblance would doubtless disappear altogether if he and the other ever came face to face, but to a stranger if might be convincing. Yet he was confronted by two important questions—had Hooligan ever met Billy, and, if not, was it possible that he had seen Wayne during his period of unconsciousness?

Neither question could be answered otherwise than through experiment. To take a chance was the only solution, and that chance was so desperate as to yield him small encouragement.

In addition to the danger from Hooligan himself, he would face the possibility of encountering Cowan or some of his gang To be sure, they might now believe him dead, but that would never prevent recognition.

The scheme was altogether too reckless, and was dismissed before he had walked a block; only as a last resort would he consider it seriously.

The visit to the bank added but little to his stock of information. Carlton was not in, had gone on a fishing-trip to Wisconsin, and might not return for ten days. Watson, the senior partner, knew Wayne only slightly, and, while he endeavored to be polite, was not inclined to talk freely about a matter of business in the hands of the house.

Wayne, on his part, was handicapped by a desire not to explain too clearly the cause of his interest in the matter. It would never do, at this stage at least, to arouse Watson's suspicions.

Carlton could have been trusted to act with discretion; but Watson would only ring up the police headquarters and mess up the whole affair.

However, by extremely careful inquiries, Wayne managed to extract a few important facts from the cautious financier. He learned that the bank was acting in the matter of the Patrick Cullom estate; the will was already in probate, and practically the entire property had been left to a granddaughter, Zaida Grayson.

There had been no contest, and the bank was authorized to honor the girl's checks to a reasonable amount. No, she was not at present in the city; she had been long enough to execute certain papers, but had departed for the South—Florida.

Her personal representative in Chicago was a friend of her father's, who had come from Mexico with her, a Señor Juan Almerido, a lawyer. Yes, he had been given power of attorney. Miss Grayson was not in good health, and required a milder climate

It might be several weeks yet before a final settlement was made. Señor Almerido –he received his mail at the Central Hotel, but generally called at the bank once a day—was a very pleasant gentleman to deal with; but foreign, and somewhat unacquainted with American business methods. Rather impatient to have the affair settled, so he might return to Mexico.

This comprised the gist of what Wayne, questioning judiciously, succeeded in extracting from Watson. However, he did this without awakening the banker's suspicions that his curiosity was unusual, and they parted on friendly terms.

Nothing had been said that was likely to lead Watson to mention the visit to Almerido, and Wayne dare not venture further than he did. He desired to see the handwriting of this mysterious Miss Grayson, who had so swiftly disappeared southward, evidently to avoid observation, but could think of no reasonable excuse for such a request. His limited acquaintance with Watson would scarcely justify such a suggestion

He dropped in at a near-by hotel and sat down in the lobby to think the matter over, and endeavor to plan out some practical course of action. The plan of the conspiracy was becoming more and more clear, and seemingly was working perfectly. Thus far no suspicion had been aroused, and the gang had nothing further to do, except keep out of sight and calmly await results.

No thought that Cullom had been deliberately murdered had even been sug-

gested—the verdict of the coroner's jury, and the prompt burial of the unfortunate victim, had apparently closed that chapter permanently; while Almerido, posing as a Mexican lawyer, and invested with proper authority by power of attorney from the heiress, occupied a position of respectability and trust, unquestioned by those he had to deal with.

All he had to do was wait patiently, and the entire fortune would come tumbling easily into his hands. It was most simple; and to his mind, as well as Cowan's, must by this time appear devoid of danger. Nothing remained but to securely guard the real heiress from discovery until after they secured the money and had safely made their getaway.

And there was little to fear from this source. The young woman possessed no friends in Chicago. Wayne, the one person to whom she had desperately appealed for help, they thought had been safely disposed of, wounded unto death, and sent west in a box car, under guard. Doubtless by now Bill had duly informed them that their victim had been left a corpse on the train, with no means of identification on the body.

That settled that possibility of exposure. There was only one other—the unknown detective encountered in the Hartigan house. What he might know was problematical, but he would scarcely prove a source of danger, unless he got possession of the girl. There was no way of ascertaining the truth but through her testimony.

So assured were they now that Wayne had been put out of the way, and that the path before them was absolutely clear of danger, that they had come boldly out into the open, confident of success. Only one fact remained to breed fear in their minds, and render them cautious—Wayne's threatening words, revealing his knowledge of how Patrick Cullom had come to his death.

To be sure Wayne had been disposed of; but how had he come into possession of such knowledge? And did any other share his information? That question probably never gave the fellows a moment's rest; it would tend to keep them constantly on guard.

Wayne must have sat there for hours, oblivious to his surroundings, his mind intent on the problem. With Stiles away the solution rested with him alone. He could not face it with professional calmness, waiting patiently for some new development

It was not the crime which interested him, but the fate of Zaida Grayson. Not for a moment could he banish the girl from his mind; awake or asleep she called him.

And ever his thought led back to the same ending—Billy Burke, and the possibility of his successfully impersonating that crook. If it could be done, if he dared attempt it, he might thus find a way into the mystery of Hooligan's place.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FACING BAT HOOLIGAN.

WITH the approach of night the temptation to essay the adventure became irresistible. It not only appealed to his naturally venturesome spirit, but it seemed easier than to remain quiet.

Yet even then he decided to proceed with caution, proposing merely to explore the neighborhood first, while permitting circumstances to determine the chances he would eventually take.

His preparations were simple, the secreting of a revolver in his pocket, and the exchange of his hat for a cap. Burke, Corcoran said, was a good dresser, and the cap pulled well down answered as a partial disguise; to attempt more would be likely to arouse rather than lull suspicion.

He was happier in this decision than he had been all day, and so certain of the outcome of the adventure that he left no message behind. What was the use? If anything serious resulted Corcoran would hear of his disappearance and connect the incident with his inquiry relative to Hooligan.

Wayne proceeded down Canal Street on foot, interested in studying the surroundings. It was a new section of the city to him, after leaving the immediate vicinity of the Union Depot. The blocks were occupied by manufacturing concerns, black and vacant at this hour of the night, the

only illumination, except from dim arc lights overhead, coming through numerous grimy saloon windows.

Only occasionally did he meet with pedestrians, and those of the rougher sort, who eyed him curiously as they passed. Further south the evidences of night-life became more pronounced, with cheap restaurants ablaze and well patronized, women as well mingling along the curb.

Several of the former spoke to him as he passed, but he left them without response. Indeed, the specimens of both sexes thus encountered only added to his vague uneasiness. They were emphatically of the underworld, making it clear by their appearance, as well as by scraps of conversation overheard, that he had invaded a new section of city life.

The few policemen he encountered stared into his face, as though endeavoring to recall his features to memory, so that, altogether, much of the courage had oozed out of him before he reached the exact locality he sought.

Hooligan's place was extremely well situated for the class of trade to which it very evidently catered. It occupied the corner basement of a three-story red-brick, an old, rather ramshackle building as revealed by the flaring electric light. The second-story windows were barred by iron gratings, with here and there a wooden balcony appearing, adding to the hideous appearance of it all.

Whether the floor on the street-level was occupied at all Wayne was unable to determine; there was no light and the windows were bare, except for numerous show-posters. Here and there lights gleamed from some of the windows farther above, while the only illumination before Hooligan's saloon-door was an electric cluster over the doorway, making clear the steps leading down.

This light shone brilliantly on the sign, "Pat's Place," but the curtains were all closely drawn, preventing any revealing glimpse of the interior. Nor did there seem to be much business going and coming through this entrance.

Wayne loitered in the shadows opposite for some time, but while he watched only four people entered—a man and woman together, and two men separately; one of the latter immediately returning to the street. The saloon on the north corner appeared to be doing far more business, a piano tinkling within mingling with the noise of voices.

A policeman rounded the corner and stood for a moment leaning over the iron rail, as though listening for some sound below, but finally passed on, swinging his night-stick. His eyes, although searching the shadows, failed to perceive Wayne crouched in a dark doorway, and after the sound of his heavy steps ceased the latter darted across the street, unable to remain quiet any longer.

There being nothing further to learn from a study of the front, he advanced up the side street as far as the narrow alley at the rear of the house. The windows were all dark, uncurtained, the immediate space within evidently unused. Half-way back a door confronted him, which he tried cautiously, only to discover that it was securely locked.

The button of an electric-bell tempted his finger, but, if this was a secret entrance, he was not yet ready to face the questions and scrutiny within. Instead, he slipped along into the alley at the rear, neither seeing nor hearing anything to alarm him.

It was so black here that he advanced only a few steps, coming to a rear cellar-entrance, strongly padlocked, and locating the folding lower section of an iron fire-escape.

He could have leaped up and reached this, but was fearful it might squeak under his weight; besides, the only light showing was far up in the third story.

If he was to enter the building at all the safest course to take would be to go boldly in through the saloon.

With his half determined upon he retraced his steps to the street. As he rounded the corner a man snuggled unseen against the wall suddenly laid a hand heavily upon his shoulder.

"Well, pal, what's all this snoopin' about?" snarled an unpleasant voice. "Don't cut no didoes now, or I'll let yer have it. What yer doin' round yere?"

Wayne stared into a square-jawed face, with an ugly protruding chin. His heart leaped into his throat, yet his brain was clear, and his voice steady.

"Looking for a chance to slip in without making a show," he answered, instantly feeling that this fellow, whoever he was, could be no friend of the law. "I'm keeping in the dark just now."

"Is that so? Well, what about it? Who was yer lookin' fer?"

"Bat Hooligan; but first I wanted ter talk with him alone, see?"

"Friend o' Bat's?"

"No, I ain't; never seen him, but he's a friend of a friend o' mine. I never did no work West; that's why I come here, because my friend said this place was all right, see?"

"Who's yer friend?"

Wayne lowered his voice to a whisper, glancing cautiously about.

"Bob Howland."

"You a pal o' his?"

"Yes."

"Whar'd yer know Bob?"

"New York and along the coast."

"An' never know'd Bat?"

"No, I've never been in Chi before. Bob told me if I ever was, an' wanted ter hide-out, or get some junk off my hands, to hunt up Hooligan."

"What's yer monnicker?"

"Burke Billy Burke."

The other ejaculated an oath and gripped Wayne's hand.

"By gum! I'm glad ter meet yer," he exclaimed. "My name's Murphy—Spike Murphy—I ain't in yer line, but I knows Bob Howland fer ten years, an' maybe ye've heerd him speak about me.

"I was readin' terday how yer cleaned up in Cleveland—some sparklers, hey? Yer sure showed sense comin' yere fer a git-away.

"I'll git yer into Bat. Seed anything of a patrolman 'long yere lately?"

"One went down Canal about ten minutes ago."

"That will be Casey; the Swede Hultgren has got the north beat, but he ain't due yet. It's a good time to beat it right now, pal. Stick close ter me."

Wayne had ventured so far that there was now no escape. To attempt to cut and run would defeat every hope; and indeed he had no inclination to waste the opportunity presented.

The very enthusiasm with which he had been greeted by this Spike Murphy was evidence of the criminal reputation of Billy Burke, and also of the probability that he would pass muster within. Bat might ask some awkward questions, yet undoubtedly would accept him on faith, and the only real danger he assumed was a possible encounter with some one of Cowan's gang, who might recognize and denounce him.

If this occurred his life would not be worth the snap of a finger. He was walking straight into the lion's jaws—but the cause justified the risk. Such an opportunity might never present itself again, and he did not hesitate.

These thoughts flashed through his mind, but he kept close beside Spike, while the latter, with eyes covertly searching the street, pressed the call-bell with his finger.

"Bat owns this whole building?" he asked, to quiet his nerves more than anything else.

"Leases it," Spike growled, listening eagerly for some movement from within. "His partner runs a sorter hotel up-stairs; but yer ain't goin' ter run into nobody yer don't want ter see.

"It's all on the dead-quiet. Hooligan has his own rooms, an' he does a lot o' business, too, let me tell yer."

"On the quiet?"

"Sure; that you, Joe?" as a small wicket in the door disclosed a pair of eyes peering forth. "This is Spike; of course it's all right; oh, I know this guy as well as I do you. Slip her open while the street's clear."

The door must have been securely bolted and barred, and when it finally opened the space barely permitted their slipping through one at a time. Within was pitch darkness, but as soon as the fastenings were secured some one turned on an electric light, revealing a bare, wood-ceiled passageway leading back toward the center of the building.

The man who had manipulated the door was a young fellow, stoop-shouldered and

rat-faced, with piercing black eyes and thin, cruel lips. He leaned against the wall, staring suspiciously at the newcomer.

"Yer never bin yere before," he said. "Who are yer? And what do yer want?"

"Now, see yere, Joe," broke in Murphy disgustedly, "you shut up, er I'll punch yer head. This yere is a friend o' mine, who wants ter talk private with Bat.

"I knows the guy, an' that's enough, see! Where is the ol' man?"

"In the bar, I reckon," sullenly, but evidently fearful of prodding Mr. Murphy too far. "But yer better leave this guy in the office till yer make sure. I ain't had sight of Bat since I come ter work."

With a grunt indicative to Wayne to follow him, Spike led the way along the narrow passage, which was barely high enough to enable them to remain erect. Joe seated himself on a bench by the door, and picked up a newspaper, although his suspicious eyes continued to follow the two.

Evidently the passage had been boxed in for a purpose, for it was unbroken by any opening either to right or left, ending in the main hallway of the building, opposite flights of stairs leading both up and down. The passage was a mere tunnel, but the hall to which it led was wide, with high ceilings and the staircases broad, protected with a strip of carpet.

There was straw matting on the floor, but the front entrance had been boarded up, so that no gleam of light could be seen from without. Spike took the stairs leading down to the basement, and Wayne, realizing his helpless imprisonment, could do nothing but follow.

Clearly enough he was within a veritable castle of crime, his only hope of extricating himself resting upon nerve and good luck. However, it was too late to retreat; nothing remained but to act out the character he had assumed, and meet the consequences as best he might.

While outwardly calm and observant, his heart beat like a trip-hammer as Murphy threw open a door and bade him enter.

It was a basement apartment, but bore no visible resemblance to an underground room. The walls, unbroken by windows, and the ceilings were of wood, painted a dull gray. Only two doors were discernible, the one by which he had entered from the hall, and another apparently opening into the front bar.

The place was furnished rather sparsely as an office, a rug covering the floor, a paper cabinet against the further wall, a desk and a swivel-chair in the center, and a few ordinary chairs scattered about. The top of the desk was clear, unlittered by papers of any kind, while in one of the corners was a massive safe.

Two or three pictures, steel engravings, depicting country scenes, relieved the monotony of the gray walls. Indeed, the entire appearance of the interior resembled that of the office of a successful, methodical business man, and Wayne stared about in perplexity. It was not at all what he expected to find.

But Spike's only interest was in the absence of Hooligan.

"Sit down, Burke," he said, indicating a chair. "Must be Bat didn't hear the bell. That's his voice talkin' out there now; I'll go tell him whose yere."

He disappeared through the second door, and Wayne, still staring uneasily about, realizing how completely he was in the mouth of the trap, endeavored vainly to distinguish what was being said in the room beyond. The dull dreariness of the place in which he was waiting, the gray, windowless walls shutting him in, only added to the nerve strain under which he labored.

The orderly condition of the desk had its effect also, picturing to him the character of the man he was about to meet — cold, cautious, suspicious; a fellow whose life was spent dealing with criminals, ever playing a dangerous game, ever getting his blood-money.

To deceive one like Hooligan would prove far more difficult than he had supposed—he was no ordinary roughneck, but a shrewd manipulator, who would test him thoroughly. Yet, strangely enough, this knowledge only served to harden Wayne's purpose, left him more keen and alert for the encounter.

Now that he was in it he would play his cards; there was no other possible course, no other chance to win. The very

imminence of danger cooled his blood and brought with it reckless audacity.

He dared not approach the closed door to learn what was transpiring without. Instead, to lull suspicion, he crossed the room, and, with back to the entrance, stood inspecting one of the pictures. He was thus engaged when Spike and another entered, and turned deliberately to face them, his eyes frankly meeting the inquiring gaze of Bat Hooligan.

The latter was a powerfully built man of sixty, with a heavy thatch of iron-gray hair, a keen, smoothly shaven face, and searching, light-blue eyes. It was an aggressive face, ugly in a way, because of a long nose and thin lips.

He looked more Jewish than Irish, and the quick survey he made of the man waiting to see him was far from friendly. Wayne's impulse forced him instantly to grasp the bull by the horns.

"This is Bat Hooligan, I am sure," he said cordially, stepping forward with extended hand. "I would recognize you anywhere from Bob's description."

Hooligan responded, but rather stiffly, his grasp moist and relaxed, while his eyes continued to stare straight into those of the younger man.

"Bob who?" he asked, his voice thin and penetrating.

"Howland, of course; didn't Spike explain who I was?"

"He said you claimed to be Billy Burke," the dive-keeper returned coldly, "but I have to know men before I do business with them. What have you got to show?"

"Nothing," assuring a nonchalance he was far from feeling. "Take me, or fire me, as you please, Hooligan. I am not fool enough to run about Chi with my pockets full of identification papers.

"In fact, it was only twelve hours ago that I found it necessary to come here. My getaway was blocked, and I had to turn west. Then I thought of you, and how you'd always stood by Bob—so I headed in here. If I'm not welcome, I'll get out."

Hooligan stared at him in silence; then suddenly turned to Murphy.

"Wait in the bar till I send for you," he said sharply. "Sit down there, Burke, as you call yourself, and we'll talk a bit."

He waited until Spike disappeared, and then dropped heavily into the swivel-chair, leaning forward toward Wayne, with hands on his knees, and chin thrust forward.

"Now, young fellow," he said threateningly, "you talk straight, and I'll listen You may be Billy Burke, and again you may not, but I reckon I'll find out, one way or another. Where did you ever know Bob Howland?"

From the reminiscences of Corcoran Wayne had absorbed sufficient details to render him confident of being able now to tell a story which would seem natural and true. Convinced that Bat only knew the general outlines of Howland's operations in the East he felt no hesitancy in adding details to the narrative.

"All right," he said, "ask me any darn thing you please. I know you, and you don't know me—so I'm not afraid to talk straight to you. How about a cigar first?"

Hooligan opened a drawer in the desk and produced a box, but took none himself. Wayne deliberately selected one and lighted it, his mind hastily arranging the form of his narrative. He appeared quite at ease, tossing his cap on the desk and leaning back in the chair.

"First time I've felt comfortable since I jumped out of Cleveland," he announced. "Police ever break in here?"

"No," gruffly. "Push ahead: I'm listening!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE ENTRANCE OF DORA.

IN spite of Hooligan's bruskness of manner and speech, Wayne, alertly watching the man through the haze of cigar smoke, felt satisfied that his own play-acting had told, and that suspicion had already changed into interest. With added confidence he began his story, sketching lightly but effectively his first meeting with Bob Howland, and some early incidents of their career together.

As he came down to matters on which

Corcoran had spoken, and about which Hooligan also probably had some knowledge, he ventured to enter more into detail, mentioning dates and places. He did not speak as a braggart in crime, but related these occurrences simply, and in so convincing a way as to strongly impress Bat that he was telling the truth.

The latter asked few questions, his expressionless eyes either staring straight in front of him at the wall or else turning quickly on the speaker's face.

When Wayne paused, as if he had completed his narrative, the older man remained motionless for some minutes, nursing his knee.

"Do you know where Bob is now?" he asked bluntly.

"South America; Callao—last word I had."

"He's skipped to the Argentine. I heard from him a week ago; he mentioned your name."

"Said nothing of coming back?"

"No; he's doing well, he'll not dare to come back for a while yet. What about this last job of yours—Cleveland, wasn't it?"

"Yes; easy picking at a hotel, but an accident balled me up in the getaway."

"The papers credit it to you; how was that? Seen?"

"No; it's just the style of the job, I suppose. They haven't really anything on me, Hooligan, only suspicion that I was there about that time.

"All I need do is lie low till the affair blows cold, or they fasten on somebody else. You know a fly-cop in this town named Corcoran?"

"Sure—used to be down here; he's at headquarters. Why?"

"Well, I got in just about dark and dropped into an eating-place down in the loop. There were two guys at the next table, and one of 'em had a paper.

"I wouldn't noticed if they hadn't spoke my name; then naturally I listened. One was called Corcoran and the other answered to Bill."

"Bill Dermont likely—the chief."

"Maybe; he was a big, burly cuss; neither in uniform. Well, they were discussing my case, and Corcoran said that there was no evidence against me, nothing to convict on; just a blind guess of those Cleveland guys. I thought they were fly-cops from the way they talked."

Hooligan laughed, the incident appealing to his grim sense of humor.

"And you sit there at arm's length listening to those wise guys talk it over, hey? Maybe there ain't no evidence, as they said, but either one of them would give a month's pay to get a hand on you, just the same.

"Likely they'd both looked up your picture first thing that morning to have it fresh in mind. Corcoran drops in here once in a while; next time I'll tell him that story—the damned whelp."

He reached into the desk-drawer and brought out a cigar, placing it between his lips without lighting.

"What was the swag?"

"Necklace, two rings and a pendant, if I am any judge, about seven thousand."

"Got them with you?"

"No; they're planted."

"Then you're not here to cash in?"

"Not now. I'll talk about that later, when it's safe. I'm flush enough, Bat, only I had to find some place to hide-out in for a few weeks; that's what brought me here."

Hooligan took time to think it over, too shrewd a fox to venture an opinion at once. Wayne, apparently indifferent, secretly watched him through the smoke wreaths, careful to avert his eyes as the fellow glanced his way.

In spite of his ease of manner he was far from sure that he had convinced the other of his identity, yet deemed it best to remain silent.

"I reckon you are Burke, all right," admitted Bat finally, "though I'd been more sure if you had brought a sparkler or two with you. Anyhow, you're about the kind of a guy that I took you to be from what Bob's said—so I'll take a chance

"Glad you told me about what Bill Dermont and Corcoran had to say, 'cause if they was really after you they might come here, knowing about Howland being a friend o' mine.

"But I imagine they're not looking for

you to turn up in Chi. They'll be hunting you down east, more likely. Yes, you're welcome to lie low here for a while, so you keep out of sight. I ain't looking for no trouble."

"No more am I, Hooligan. I'll be ready to beat it in a week. What do you want me to do?"

"Keep out of the barroom for one thing; there's fly-cops drop in there pretty regular. The closer you stick to the third story the safer you are. At that you won't be so darn lonesome, there's a few other stowaways about the house."

"Fellows hiding out?"

"Some; there generally is. Bob, he laid up here three times. That's one thing the beaks ain't got on to yet," he chuckled. "I ain't been raided in ten years.

"They got an idea I may pick up a good thing once in a while, and occasionally a smooth guy drifts along; but this is about as far as he ever gets. Another feller—my partner—runs the up-stairs, and there's never been no complaint of him at headquarters. He'll likely want some money—how are you heeled?"

"Oh, I've got plenty; what's the price?"

"Room and eats—for you won't want to go out—about five bucks a day. We ain't here for our health, you know. That all right?"

"Of course, old man; I've paid more. Who else is here?"

"Nobody you know; besides, that's something I never tell. You'll meet them likely, and if they want to talk it's none of my business—only I'll give you a pointer: you better lie to them if they question you; they ain't your kind. Want to go up?"

Wayne arose, picking up his cap and putting it on.

He felt confident, eager; he had successfully passed the first test, the cold scrutiny of Hooligan, yet did not feel entirely at ease under the man's cold eyes. Perhaps he believed his story, perhaps he did not and was setting a trap to deceive.

Anyhow, the younger man experienced a strong desire to be alone where he could think calmly and decide upon his future action.

Convinced as he was that Cowan's gang was actually concealed in the place—that probably they held Zaida Grayson prisoner there—he had no intention of withdrawing, yet he wanted to get safely away from the unpleasant presence of Hooligan, to where he could investigate on his own account.

The mystery of those upper floors beckoned him—he was glad to go.

"Might as well," he assented carelessly, "for I haven't had any sleep for two nights; I could snooze round the clock—"

He turned sharply, aware that some one had opened the door leading into the bar and stood in the entrance. His eyes rested in astonishment on a young woman, a blonde, with wide open-blue eyes, a rather querulous mouth and cheeks so red as to suggest rouge.

She was a bit overdressed, yet undeniably pretty in a bold, striking way. His stare embarrassed the lady not at all, but her answering gaze of interest shifted quickly to Hooligan, who still sat heavily in his chair.

"I thought you were alone," she said, her voice scarcely as agreeable as her face. "Spike did not tell me that you had a visitor."

"We're through. Come on in and get acquainted," and Bat smiled. "This is a new boarder, a traveler from New York—Mr. Burke, my daughter, Dora."

She swept forward, an ungloved hand extended, her eyes bright.

"Mr. Burke?" a slight hesitancy in her speech. "From New York? Do your friends call you Billy?"

"And also my enemies."

"Why, I am so glad to meet you. Of course I know who you are. We have callers from New York every once in a while—don't we, papa? And, besides, you are quite famous just now."

"Altogether too much so," the young man admitted, "for my comfort, Miss Hooligan; but," he added gallantly, "it has, at least, given me the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"Don't mind her, Burke," broke in the father indulgently. "She does all her talking inside and not on the street. She's on to the game, and never spills nothing."

"I can well believe that, and realize

now the great advantages of being a guest here. You spoke of a room?"

"Who is in front there, Dora?"

"Spike and a couple of floaters; with old Galvin asleep in one corner."

"It will be safer to go up the other way."

He crossed over to a key-board, from which he selected one, coming back with it in his hand.

"How about you showing Burke up? I am getting too old to climb stairs."

She laughed, with a swift side glance at the young man as she grasped the key.

"Why, of course. It is quite an honor—you are not afraid, Mr. Burke?"

"Yes, but I am," protested the make-believe, eager to make a good impression, "for you are dangerous. However, I face the peril willingly as a volunteer."

"That was very nicely said, and I accept the sacrifice; we will go this way."

She opened the same door by which Wayne had entered the room, and, closely following her, he emerged again into the outside hall. Hooligan had sunk back into his chair, his eyes gazing into vacancy, his mind indifferent to their departure.

The two mounted the stairs together in the dim glow of a single-shaded globe, the girl talking rapidly, and the man merely murmuring his response. He glanced aside at the outline of his companion's face, striving to read more clearly her character.

She was fascinating in a way, decidedly pretty, yet as certainly without that distinction of class to which he had been accustomed. Indeed, he scarcely knew exactly how to classify her to his satisfaction; she evidently belonged to another world.

Crime could not mean to her what it did to him; she had been brought up breathing its atmosphere. These surroundings, familiar since childhood, had stamped themselves on mind and manner

She was doubtless a fiery little vixen, true to the distorted code of her world, loyal to those of her circle, not particularly intellectual, yet no fool. How far could he go with her under the guise of friendship? How great was her confidence in him? What questions could he ask, without arousing her suspicion?

These were some of the queries rapidly assailing his mind as they mounted the stairs together, her words reaching his ears almost meaningless.

His greatest interest centered about her name—Dora. Could there be two Doras connected so strangely, or could it be possible that he actually had stumbled upon the same girl who had visited Zaida in the Hartigan house, and had later masqueraded as the granddaughter of Patrick Cullom?

He scarcely could grasp the thought as his eyes studied the animated face beside him; and yet, why not? She certainly possessed the boldness, the daring, to assume such a part, and it was scarcely likely that her life-training had been such as to leave her averse to this kind of crime.

If, as he had some reason to believe, Cowan and his gang had found shelter here; if they were criminally connected with her father, it would be most natural that she also should be involved in the plot.

Indeed, he had convinced himself that this must be true, for a look at her laughing eyes exploded the whole theory.

"Why so glum, Mr. Burke?" she questioned. "It may not be so bad as you think."

"I am dog-tired," he answered, for lack of some better explanation. "To-morrow you'll find me lively enough."

"I sure hope so," she confessed frankly, "for you surely do not look like a dummy. Then my kindness to-night must take a different form. All right, here's the room—it is evident it is not entertainment but a bed that you want."

He paused in the open door and took her hand.

"Do not think me ungrateful," he urged, feeling the reproach in her voice and instantly regretful of his indifference, "but really I am tired. No, don't go yet; tell me, is this place quite safe?"

"No one knows, of course," she answered frankly, her eyes searching his face, "where the police may strike, but they have not raided this building for years. Father pays for protection and controls a large vote. If you have not been shadowed there is no danger."

"But there are others hiding here?" he ventured

She laughed in good humor.

"No one the department is after—just a bunch who prefer keeping out of sight for a while. They are not your class, Mr. Burke; nobody wants them."

"Some underhand game?"

"Well," she admitted, "naturally it is not the sort they care to advertise. This hotel wouldn't last long if we was after first-class trade."

"Say," he exclaimed, encouraged by her manner, and determined to take the plunge, "this ain't the gang in that Cullom deal, is it?"

"What do you know about that?" surprised, and instantly on guard.

"Mighty little, but just enough to be curious. For if they are they are not so far underground as you think. The police are on to them, and I don't want to get tangled up in that net."

"The police are on? How?"

The sparkle had gone from her eyes, the color from her cheeks, except for the spots of rouge. She stepped inside the room, closed the door, and faced him.

"Now, see here," she said swiftly, her whole manner of speech changing, "talk straight to me. Where did you hear about this?"

(To Be Continued NEXT WEEK.)

OUTWARD BOUND.

BY SHELLBACK.

GREEN waves under her forefoot;
Gray meadows dim on the lee.
We have done with joy and sorrow,
Swing round her head to the sea!

Ah, love, will you deem us cruel,
That we leave you thus alone?
The blue sea calls to her children,
The sons she has made her own.

Tired of the sounding city,
Fierce joy and fiercer pain,
Our hearts grow calm to the music
Of the hoisted anchor-chain.

Tired of the stifling city,
Of selling our peace for gold,
We go to the mother that reared us,
And the things we know of old—

The song of the wind in the rigging,
The drumming sound of the sail,
The creak of the straining timbers
As she lifts and dips to the gale.

Blue waves under her forefoot,
The fading land on the lee,
We are back to manlier business
On the breast of the open sea.

DISPARAGOUS REMARKS.

BY AUGUSTUS WITTFELD.

Love and Luck Were Elements in the Battle Between the Tennessee Tulip and the Georgia Geranium.

THE telephone bell rang last Thursday evening, and Arthur answered it.

"Hello!" he called. "Oh, hello, Brady! What you got on your chest?"

Of course I couldn't hear what Mr. Brady had on his chest. Whether it was a chest-protector or the decoration of the double-cross, or what, but, whatever it was, it seemed to disconcert Arthur for the moment

"Say, that's tough luck!" he commented, after Mr. Brady had evidently finished imparting the information. "What do you suppose has got into him? Can it be that he is getting cold feet?"

The idea of any one getting cold feet in the torrid weather that we were then experiencing! The remark was positively inane

But the next one was worse. It was mystifying.

"Say, Brady! We can't afford to let him lay down on the job. He's got to put some pep into his work when he bumps up against the Georgia Geranium, or the other bunch will walk home with the bacon.

"Better come right out here and we will chew this thing over. So-long! I'll be waiting for you."

"Arthur Armitage Oliver," I exclaimed, after he had hung up, "what in the world were you talking about? Your conversation was about as enlightening as are the directions for knitting a sweater printed in the Sunday magazine sections."

"We were discussing the Tennessee Tulip," replied Arthur, grinning. "Brady, his manager, is worried about the way he has been acting lately."

"The Tennessee Tulip!" I exclaimed. "Why, that's the colored prize-fighter who found my diamond ring. Isn't it?"

"Sure it is," replied Arthur. "Calamity's finanshay."

"Why in the world should two sensible men like you and Mr. Brady concern yourselves about *his* actions?" I demanded.

"Why should we!" exclaimed Arthur. "Say, Dot! At the present time Brady and I are more interested in the Tennessee Tulip than we are in our meals—and that's saying a whole lot, if you know Phil Brady.

"Brady is managing the Tulip, and between us we have arranged to pull off a match between him and the Georgia Geranium at the Country Club next week They are a pair of fast boys, about evenly matched, and our bunch is backing the Tulip to the limit, so you can readily understand why we are concerned over him acting geflooey."

"Arthur Armitage Oliver!" I exclaimed. "Have you wagered any money on the result of this prize-fight?"

"It's not a prize-fight," protested Arthur. "It is a boxing bout for points."

"Don't quibble, Arthur," I cautioned him. "Have you wagered any money on the result?"

"Er—a little," stuttered Arthur. "You see, the boys made up a pool and I went in for twenty-five bones. It looked like easy money to me."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Arthur Oliver, to throw good money away in such a manner!" I exclaimed.

"But I'm not throwing it away," protested Arthur. "We're getting odds on our money, and I stand to win thirty-five bucks, if the shine turns the trick."

"Thirty-five dollars!" I exclaimed. "Why, that is all that Celeste is asking for that perfectly adorable motor coat I was looking at the other day. Are you *sure* that the Tennessee Turnip will win?"

"For the love of Pete, Dot!" laughed Arthur. "Tulip—not Turnip. Of course he's going to win."

"Won't that be too perfectly lovely for anything!" I cried. "Then you can buy the coat for me, you old dear!"

Arthur opened his mouth to protest, but just then the door bell rang, and he answered it and admitted Mr. Brady.

They discussed the Tennessee Tulip forward and backward, and to hear them rave one would have thought that he was the brightest star in the fistic firmament -I think that is the correct term—and from what I could gather from their chatter, Mr. Brady was awfully concerned because the Tulip was off his feed, was moping around like a bear with a sore dome, and absolutely refused to enlighten him—Mr. Brady—as to the cause of his crust. Really, Mr. Brady explained everything beautifully.

"How long has he been acting that way?" asked Arthur.

"Since last Monday," replied Mr. Brady. "I saw him out driving with a black wren last Sunday, and he seemed to be enjoying himself. You know he owns a fairly speedy road-horse, and I judge the dame was his sweetheart.

"I've tried my darndest to find out what ails the boy, but all I can get out of him is: 'You leave this nigger alone, Marse Brady! I's got a heap of trouble on my mind!'"

"Like all Southern darkies," commented Arthur, "the Tennessee Tulip is awfully superstitious. I was just wondering if some one has pulled some of that voodoo stuff on him."

"By George," exclaimed Mr. Brady, "I never thought of that! I wonder whether we couldn't find out some way?"

"Arthur," I interrupted, with visions of that perfectly lovely motor coat vanishing into nothingness if the Tennessee Tulip got worsted, or bested—whatever the terms is —"perhaps Calamity could tell me what ails Mr. Tulip."

"Dot," exclaimed Arthur admiringly, "you're a pippin! Of course it must have been Calamity that the Tulip had out driving last Sunday, and if anybody knows what ails him, I'll bet she does.

"You leave it to Mrs Oliver, Brady. After she gets through with Calamity the Tulip won't have a secret he can call his own"

Mr. Brady beamed his thanks and, shortly after, took his departure.

As Calamity always comes to clean for me on Friday, I felt confident that on the morrow I would learn if anything had happened during their drive on the previous Sunday, which might explain the Tulip's erratic behavior

Arthur and I had been out motoring the previous Sunday, and, really, I must tell you what happened to the dear boy during that outing.

It was a beautiful day. In fact it was an ideal day for motoring, and as I lay back in the cushions, enjoying the scenery and listening to the soothing purr of the motor, I was care-free and contented

Suddenly Arthur threw on the brake and brought the car to such a sudden stop that I thought he had done nothing less than run down an incautious pedestrian.

"What in the world is the matter?" I gasped.

Arthur did not stop to reply, but leaped from the car and started to run back along the country road like mad. I resigned myself to the inevitable and leaned back in the cushions, waiting for Arthur to return, that I might learn the worst.

Presently he ambled back leisurely, carrying something in his hand.

"Arthur Armitage Oliver!" I cried "What in the world is the matter? It is getting so lately that we cannot go out for a ride without your hopping out and running back to gather wild flowers or to recover the detachments that the Drof has shed.

"What is it this time—the thingmabob or the whatyoumaycallit?"

"Neither," laughed Arthur. "It is a horseshoe."

"Gracious!" I exclaimed. "I knew that nearly everything under the sun enters into

the make-up of this car, but I never knew before that it wears horseshoes."

"It doesn't," laughed Arthur. "This shoe was shed by a nag that some one was driving."

"But why should you bother going back for it?" I asked. "Do you think that the loser is going to offer a reward for it?"

"Dorothy," chided Arthur, "your ignorance is appalling. Don't you know that the finding of a horseshoe brings luck to the finder?"

"Finding a horseshoe may bring luck to the ordinary mortal," I replied. "But that is no reason why *you* should wear a good-luck smile over finding one. If I were you, Arthur, I would throw it away before it rears up and hands you a good, swift kick."

"I may be unlucky, Dot," protested Arthur, "but I'm not a darned bit superstitious! I'm going to hang on to this piece of equine footwear, just to prove to you that I am not different from other mortals. That stuff about *me* being unlucky is all bunk!"

I smiled at Arthur's conceit, and a few minutes after we had got under way I indulged in another smile, which was induced by one of the rear tires blowing out with a report like a gas bomb—or whatever kind of bomb it is that makes a terrific report.

"Hang it all!" grumbled Arthur. "That's the first time that tire ever behaved like that."

"Do you think the horseshoe had anything to do with it?" I asked teasingly.

Arthur frowned and maintained a dignified silence, and the only time that he seemed to be his own dear, rational self, while replacing that tire, was when he barked the knuckles of his right hand.

Of course he didn't blame the horseshoe for *that*, but, nevertheless, his language sounded like a truck-driver's invocation on a crowded thoroughfare during the rush hour.

I helped him all I could with his work by wandering off to pick flowers, and by the time I returned with a big bunch of daisies the air was clarified, the tire replaced, and Arthur's temperature was back to normal

But not for long! For the accursed machine seemed to be so bent on demonstrating how many kinds of original sin entered into its make-up that by the time we reached home Arthur's temperature had mounted to about one hundred and twenty degrees Foreignheat, and the word "horseshoe" had been annexed by him as the battle-cry of the Oliver clan.

But Arthur's cerebric cyclones are of short duration, and seated in his own easy chair, with a good cigar between his teeth and the "lucky" horseshoe reposing in the tool-box of the Drof, his unfailing good humor quickly returned.

When Calamity arrived on Friday morning she seemed to be abstracted and not her own sunny self. I refrained from questioning her, knowing from past experience that work was the best remedy for her condition.

Toward noon snatches of song floated to me from where Calamity was engaged, and I smiled happily, for I knew that the sunshine of her disposition was breaking through the clouds.

"Calamity," I said a little later as she entered the kitchenette for a pail of water, "have you seen Mr. Tulip recently?"

"No 'm," she replied. "Not sence last Sunday."

"A little bird told me that you were out driving with him last Sunday," I teased her. "Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Huh!" she exclaimed. "How's a lady gwine to 'joy herself wid a fool nigger whut thinks he's a prize-fighter and can't talk 'bout nothin' else?"

"Then you do not approve of Mr. Tulip's fistic aspirations?" I questioned.

"Ah don't know sussactly whut you means by fistic exasperations, Mis' Oliver," replied Calamity. "But if you means dat bug whut's bitin' the Tennessee Tulip, Ah most suttinly does not.

"Does you know what that fool nigger's done gone and done, Mis' Oliver? He's done gone and 'gaged hisself to fight a low-down cullud man what fight under de cognomen of 'De Gawgia Geranium!'"

"So I have heard from Mr. Oliver," I commented. "And Mr. Oliver and his

friend, Mr. Brady, who is backing Mr. Tulip, are very much worried because he is not acting in a rational manner."

"Lawd bless you, Mis' Oliver!" exclaimed Calamity. "Dat coon never do act rational. Dat jus' nachurally his way."

"Is Mr. Tulip superstitious?" I asked, pressing my advantage, now that I had Calamity talking.

"*Is* he superstitious?" repeated Calamity, rolling her eyes. "Why, Mis' Oliver, you ain't never seen no Tennessee nigger what ain't.

"That fool nigger's acchually 'fraid to walk under a ladder, 'n' if he meets up wid a cross-eyed man he b'lieves that it 'll bring him more bad luck than if he put his stockin's on wrong side out on a Friday. Ah ain't superstitious myself, Mis' Oliver, but if Ah put my stockin's on thataway on Friday, Ah'd stay in bed all day. 'Deed Ah would!"

"Mr. Oliver thinks that maybe Mr. Tulip's erratic behavior may be due to Mr. Tulip's idea that some one has put a voodoo spell upon him. Don't you think that may be possible?"

"No 'm," replied Calamity emphatically. "If dat nigger thought somebody had put a hoodoo onto him, he'd 'fuse to fight. All what ails dat 'ceited pugilist is that he done lost something whut he thought was gwine to bring him luck. Dat's all whut ails *him*."

"Do you know what it was he lost?" I asked

"Sho Ah knows!" exclaimed Calamity. "But Ah's not *tellin'* all Ah knows. If you wants to know what dat low-down prize-fighter lost, ask *him*, Mis' Oliver!"

I tried my very hardest to worm the secret from Calamity, but she was adamant—whatever that is.

When Arthur returned home that evening I told him about my talk with Calamity.

"So it is something that the Tulip lost that is worrying him," commented Arthur. "And you were unable to worm it out of Calamity. Dot, I'm afraid that you are losing your skill as a third-degree artist."

"Nothing of the sort!" I exclaimed indignantly. "When a woman won't, she won't. But when Calamity won't, she's a mule!"

"Well, I guess I'll have to try and worm the information out of the Tulip myself," laughed Arthur. "Let's eat."

We sat down to the table, and, during the meal, Arthur was preoccupied and silent. His preoccupation did not in any way affect his appetite, and it certainly was gratifying to see the way he did justice to my cooking.

Suddenly he stopped with his fork midway between his plate and its destination.

"Dot," he questioned, "did Calamity tell you what direction the Tulip drove last Sunday while they were out?"

"Why, yes," I replied. "She said that they drove out the State Road to Ridgely and stopped to see some friends there. Why?"

"The State Road," mused Arthur. "That's the same road we took last Sunday. Dot, I've got a hunch that I can name the identical article that the Tulip lost."

"What good would that do, unless you are able to restore the article to him?" I questioned.

"Well, I can do that, too, if I've got this thing doped out right," boasted Arthur. "Listen, Dot! The Tulip took Calamity out driving last Sunday, and, according to Phil Brady, it was last Monday that he was afflicted with that nobody-home condition. Consequently it must have been while he was out with Calamity that he lost his charm.

"There are two things in this world that a Southern darky believes will bring him good luck: One is the left hind foot of a graveyard rabbit, and the other is a horseshoe.

"I didn't find any left hind feet last Sunday, but I *did* find a horseshoe, and I am willing to bet my reputation as a wise guy against a last year's straw hat that I am right!"

"And you think that it was Mr. Tulip's horse that lost the shoe you found?" I asked.

"No," replied Arthur. "Not Mr. Tulip's *horse*, but Mr. Tulip *himself*. The

Tulip has been toting a horseshoe around for luck, and what is more logical than to presume that he put it in his buggy, so that luck would stay with him while he was out with Calamity?

"I remember that there was a thank-you-mum near the spot where I picked up the shoe, and I suppose the shoe was jostled out of the buggy when they struck the hump."

"Perhaps you are right," I commented. "And, oh, Arthur! Won't it be perfectly lovely if restoring the horseshoe to him will restore Mr. Tulip's confidence, and he wins the fight? Then you can collect all the money you win and buy me the motor coat. It is a dear'

"You must get the horseshoe out of the tool-box of the car, and take it to him. But please do not bring it to the apartment, for you know that we do not carry any accident insurance."

Arthur grinned.

"Say, Dot," he laughed, "I wouldn't associate with that horseshoe again on a bet. I'll go to the garage, get the blooming mascot, and send it to the Tulip by parcels-post. I think it will work better if there is an air of mystery surrounding its return."

I agreed with Arthur, and, after he had called up Mr. Brady and told him all about it, he went to the garage and carried out his plan. Then, for the next few days, he went around grinning like a Chesterfield cat.

I wish that I was a sport-writer, so that I could write a realistic account of that fight between the Tennessee Tulip and the Georgia Geranium. As the dance and supper at the Country Club was the social event of the season, I was obliged to attend, and, to tell the truth, I would have been horribly disappointed had I been unable to go.

I can truthfully say that the dance left nothing to be desired, and Arthur declares that the supper was "some supper—even if Mr. Hoover *was* sitting on the refrigerator"—and Arthur is qualified to pass judgment when it comes to eats.

I could never understand why it is that colleges lay such stress upon the study of mathematics and geometry, but when I beheld the squared circle in the center of the gymnasium, I readily understood it all, and why Mr. Euclid—or whoever it was that that invented the squared circle—is held in such veneration by staid, dignified college men

Really it was awfully exciting. The raised platform in the center of the room, the sea of upturned faces surrounding it, and the two fighters in their respective corners, attended by their seconds. I was that excited, for a while, that I actually forgot all about the motor coat.

Then Chester Irwin mounted the stage and announced that the contest would be a scientific exhibition and not a slugging match, at which Arthur turned to me and winked. Really I don't know why he did so, for I think it was uncalled for, and, furthermore, I hate to be winked at.

Then Chester called the principals to the front and introduced them.

"The Tennessee Tulip," he announced, indicating Mr. Tulip, and the uproar was deafening. "The Georgia Geranium," he announced, indicating Mr. Tulip's antagonist, and another cheer went up.

Then another gentleman took Chester's place and talked to the two fighters, telling them what they were *not* to do and threatening dire penalties if they tried to "pull off any raw work," and then he motioned them to their places in the center of the arena.

The fighters quickly divested themselves of their bath-robes, which they handed to their attendants, and took their positions, facing one another.

I just asked Arthur to tell me what the fighters had on, so that I could describe their costumes correctly, and he replied: "Two-ounce gloves and trunks," so I suppose that will satisfy you better than if I had gone into a lengthy description.

The Tulip, as he stood there, appeared to me to be physically perfect. In fact he looked like a black marble statue of some prehistoric prize fighter, while the Geranium looked like a chocolate-coated statue of the same subject.

While I was admiring their physiques a gong clanged, or something—I really forget what, I was that excited—and the two

men shook hands and jumped away from one another. And then, for the next minute or so, things happened so quickly that I really have no definite idea of what did take place until a gong sounded and the men stopped fighting and walked to their corners.

"Who won?" I asked, excitedly grasping Arthur by the arm.

Arthur gazed at me, his face a blank; and then, as he seemed to realize what I had asked him, he told me that the fight wasn't over by a jugful — whatever he meant by that—that it was only the end of the first round.

I think that it would be presumptuous for *me* to attempt to tell you what took place during the next four rounds, for one minute that horrid Geranium person would hand Mr. Tulip such a wallop that I could see that perfectly adorable motor coat adorning the person of somebody else, only to have it restored to me the next instant, when Mr. Tulip presented his antagonist with a left hook, or something, on the head

And so it went until the sixth round, when the Geranium drove his horrid fist into Mr. Tulip's jaw with such tremendous force that my motor coat vanished into absolute nothingness

Mr. Tulip swayed on his feet, and his arms flew upward into the air. That horrid Geranium person, with the grin of a victor on his face, dropped his fists to his sides and stuck his face forward to watch the swaying figure of his antagonist crumple to the floor

Then, as the Tennessee Tulip seemed to sway toward his antagonist like a broken reed, something happened.

His two fists flashed downward with the speed of lightning and caught the leering face of the Geranium fair on the bridge of the nose, and seemed to spread that homely protuberance clear down to the Geranium's chin.

The Tulip had used the blow that Arthur had taught him, and had made it doubly effective by delivering it with both hands!

For about two seconds nobody seemed to realize what had happened, as the Geranium, and not the Tulip, went down. Then everybody seemed to go insane at once.

Even the umpire—or whatever you call him—seemed to take leave of his senses, for he stood over the prostrate figure of the Geranium, scolding him something dreadful, and emphasizing his remarks by swinging his arm up and down. I would have given anything to have heard what he was saying to him.

And all that time the Tennessee Tulip stood in the center of the arena and laughed, as though it was the funniest thing in the world. Wasn't it lovely of him to win that adorable motor coat for me?

After the excitement had subsided, and while Arthur had gone to collect his winnings, I started for the cloak-room to secure my wraps. While passing along a corridor I came face to face with Mr. Tulip, attired in his bath-robe, bound for his dressing-room.

"Good ebenin', Mis' Oliva!" he greeted me.

"Good evening, Mr. Tulip!" I replied "You put up a beautiful fight. Permit me to congratulate you on your victory. Wasn't it lucky that Mr. Oliver found the horseshoe that you had lost and sent it back to you?"

"Was it Mistah Oliva what sent me dat hossshoe?" he asked.

"Whar he get the idea dat Ah done los' a hossshoe?"

"Calamity told me that you had lost something that you depended upon to bring you luck," I replied. "And as Mr. Oliver found that horseshoe on the road over which you had been driving, he jumped at the conclusion that that was what you had lost. Wasn't *that* really it, Mr. Tulip?" I questioned.

Had such thing been possible, I am sure that Mr. Tulip would have blushed as he replied:

"No, 'm. It wasn't. Calamity an' me had a row 'bout me following the fight business, an' Ah los' her 'steem. Dat's whut made me act de way Ah did

"Ah didn't care ef Ah los' dat fight or not, aftuh Ah los' Calamity's 'steem.

"Den yesterday she sent foh me and tol' me dat dat Gawgia Geranium had been

trying to make up to her, and dat he had been making unscurrilous and disparagous remarks 'bout me, and she said that if Ah knocked his haid clean off, she'd lub me jes' as much as ever!"

"How perfectly romantic!" I exclaimed. "And you went into the fight with the firm determination to win Calamity's affections back?"

"Mis' Oliva," replied the Tulip, impressively. "Ah don't 'low no low-down Gawgia nigger to make no unscurrilous remahks 'bout *me*. Ah sholy did go in to win!"

"And so the horseshoe that Mr. Oliver sent you had nothing at all to do with your victory," I laughed.

"It sholy didn't, Mis' Oliva," replied the Tulip. "Mistah Oliva sho ought to study 'natomy. Dat ain't no hossshoe whut he done sent me. Dat's a piece o' habberdashery from de left hind laig of a *mewl!*"

LINES TO A PULLMAN PORTER.

BY DOUGLAS MALLOCH.

OH, Mr. Pullman Porter, few have sung a song to you;
There are reasons why they orter, there are reasons not a few—
Not because of any beauty, not because of any charm,
Not because you do your duty with a willing broom and arm,
Not because your help is hearty with the baggage there may be—
But because you are the party who must start the day for me.

When the morning light is breaking, when we're forty minutes out,
When you come the sheet a shaking and inform me we're about
Twenty minutes from the station, and I'd better hurry down,
That we're near our destination and are getting into town—
Though the morning is your worse'n, though the sunrise may be gray,
Please remember you're the person who must start me for the day.

I admire the shine you give me while I sleep, or try to sleep,
But there's something else, believe me, more important by a heap.
While the upper berths you're banging, while you're cleaning up the car,
And you find pajamas hanging, and you wonder whose they are,
Just remember there's another little duty all the while—
And I'll like you like a brother if you start me with a smile.

When I'm getting into Scranton, when I'm pulling into York,
When I'm getting off at Canton, or Chicago's land of pork,
Please remember this hereafter: that I have a lot to do,
That I need a lot of laughter, and it has to start with you.
You will get your shining quarter, I will drag the orders in,
If only, Mr. Porter, you will start me with a grin!

CIRCUS RED GOES TO THE POST.

BY WILLIAM H. SEYMOUR.

The Moral of This Tale Is That Brides Shouldn't Chew Tobacco During the Ceremony.

SOME wise *hombre* has said that there is three things in this old world that a guy ought to lean away from: booze, a darn-fool woman, an' a balky mule. Th' gink what gargled them wise words is two-thirds correct as far as my knowledge goes. Maybe he's right all th' way through, but I can't boost his game that far, because I ain't never had no experience with mules.

I'd have to change this dope ta make it one hundred per cent okay; instead of where it says "mule," I'd like ta say: "blame-fool partner," meaning my auburn-haired side-kick what answers to th' moniker of "Red" an' helps me ta peddle out th' lemonade an' peanuts with th' Armor Plate Circus.

Him an' me has got a swell little graft with th' juice-joint an' we knocks off a smooth bit of velvet, but every now an' then Red has ta put a crimp in th' bank-roll by gettin' an overdose of tonsil varnish or by fallin' in love with some jane in th' outfit. When it comes ta fallin' in love an' gettin' th' bee, I got ta hand it ta Red. It's th' best thing he does, an' they ain't no two ways about that

Now don't think for a minute that booze an' janes is th' only things that gets Red in Dutch. Maybe I've eased it to ya about some of th' other times when he put a moth in th' game with his magic turbin, his rabbit's foot, his hypnotic stuff, an' so on down the deck. Take it from me, I'm tellin' th' world, that partner of mine can make more bother than a ham sandwich in a synagogue

If I was a mallet worker an' had a yen ta knock Red, I could let ya in on a list of his bone plays that would be longer than a dashhound's pedergree. As it is, I'm jest goin' ta slip ya th' low-down, th' inside story of th' last one he pulled.

It was one morning when the circus-train was pullin' inta town when Red slants outa th' car-window at some grape-vines an' uncorks this one:

"Slim," he says, "this neck of woods is full of grapes. They're thicker than grass in a graveyard. I've a hunch that maybe I could make grape-juice an' peddle it fer tenpence a smash."

"Red," I says, "th' yaps in these tanks won't part with a thin dime fer a bucket of champagne. Lemonade at a nickel a corner is th' only speed they know."

"Well," Red tells me, "it 'll only set me back a few cents ta try it out. All I got ta go on th' nut fer is sugar. Give a coupla kids some passes ta the big show an' they'll pick grapes enough ta sink a ship, but at first I jest figure on makin' a little ta see if they is any dough in it. Da ya get me?"

"If yer jest goin' ta 'speriment," I says, "fly to it. More power ta ya."

Fer th' next few days Red is busy with his latest scheme. I ain't caring what he does so long as he don't get dutched up in trouble.

Everythin' round th' show is runnin' so smooth an' quiet that I thinks ta myself they ain't no more excitement in circus life than they is in reading a laundry list. When things is calm like that they is usually a crash afterward.

That puts me in mind of th' time when I went out one large, dark evening ta hustle myself a brace of gumps outa a hick henhouse. Everythin' was quiet, I'm jest goin'

ta snare th' birdies, when things begin ta happen.

First I steps on a rake; up she comes an' barks me beak. I turns loose a howl. A shotgun says: *Bough! bough!* an' three pints of blue beans float around me fleetin' figure. Next, I steps inta a well of wet, wet water.

After that experience I should oughta been leary about things bein' so quiet round th' show, but seein' that I ain't a second-sight artist I couldn't dope it out how Red was goin' ta get inta bother with his grape-juice stunt.

"How's th' grape-juice comin' along?" I asts him one mornin'.

"Okay," he tells me, "'cept that I don't think they is enough dough in it ta try ta peddle it ta th' yaps. Th' bunch round th' show puts their okay on it an' says it's a swell drink."

"Th' guerrillas round this outfit would say anythin' ta drink was swell when they don't have ta send in fer it," I tells Red. "This is a prohibition State an' them guys would drink free samples of horse liniment. Don't ferget that."

"They might be kiddin' an' then they mightn't," Red says. "Anyways they're got me booked fer ta make up a tub of it, seein' that we can't get any *real* stuff in this man's burg fer th' weddin' ta-night."

"There's one born every minute, Red," I tells him. "Fly to it. Mix up a tank of slum fer them thirsty booze-histers."

Th' weddin' what Red means is one what th' press agent has framed to be pulled off in the lions' den. Carlo, th' Dog-Face Boy, is billed fer ta hook up with Aggie, th' Wild Woman, fer better or worse.

I don't want ta be a anvil artist, but I'll tell th' world, I think both Carlo an' Aggie was gettin' stuck. They was a coupla th' funniest-lookin' freaks that ya ever rested yere lamps on outside of th' D. T's.

But th' press-agent should worry. He was draggin' down th' dough fer gettin' publicity an' fer packin' th' big top. Th' village rap-sheets fer miles around has anywhere from a coupla columns to a page of readin' matter about this freak weddin'.

"It 'll pull like a poultice," says th' adjective artist. "Them yaps will pack th' big top so tight that they'll be arms an' legs stickin' out from th' side-walls.

"Think of it, Slim!" says th' press-agent. "This weddin' of two of th' strangest, th' most marvelous of Mother Nature's monstrosities! Such a spectacle was never witnessed before in any colossal caravan of canvas within th' memory of man. Aggie, th' Wild Woman, th' wonder of wonders; a strange an' curious specimen of humanerty what exists solely upon fierce an' poisonous reptiles, captured in th' wilds of darkest Africa—"

"She eats corn-beef and cabbage an' comes from Yonkers," I interrupts.

"And brought to America at enormous expense," raves th' P. A. without givin' me a tumble. "And Carlo th' Dog-Face Boy," he says, "half-man, half-dog. A freak what has puzzled an' dumfounded th' scientists of two continents, brought hither from the jungles of Borneo—"

"He told me it was th' South Cove in Boston," I reminds th' P. A.

"Slim," says th' licensed liar, "you ain't got no imagination."

"If I had imagination like you," I says, "I wouldn't eat. I'd jest frame myself with a cook-book and read a coupla stanzas when it came time for the scoffs."

Well, ta come back ta Red an' his phony wine. When I sees him again he's got a tubful of grapes what he's bustin' up with a wooden leg what he mooched from th' cook—the same leg th' cooks uses when we has mashed potatoes.

Red is poundin' away a mile a minute an' th' juice is squirtin' round like a lawn sprinkler. He's wearin' a pink shirt, a yeller tie, an' green kelly. Ya know what color his hair is, an' ya know he's got freckles big as dimes.

Picture him splattered up with purple juice an' you'll have what th' highbrows call "a riot of color." That's what Red was when he has that tub of grapes beaten to a pulp—a riot of color.

But that didn't worry him; his biggest worry is how he'll strain th' slum.

"Slim," he says, "where in blazes will I get some cheese-cloth?"

"Ya can fan me, Red," I says, "but seein' you're so strong with th' janes ya might coax th' Oriental Beauty ta leave ya take some of her ole clothes. Ya could sift peas through them dancing rags of hers; they're as airy as a bird-cage.

"It's a bet!" says Red, an' dashes out ta join out the dancin' jane an' annex some of her wardrobe. He ain't gone more than two inhales of a cigarette when he drifts back with a strip of dry-goods in his mitt.

"Did she come through?" I asts him.

"I didn't bother diggin' her up," he tells me, "because I finds this ole lace curtain stickin' to a guy-rope over by th' dressin'-room."

Then he folds th' thing up an' gets busy strainin' th' slum. In a coupla hours he's got juice enough so's th' whole outfit can drink th' bride's health. When I sees Dog-Face, I tells him what a good scout Red is.

"Red is an ace, Slim," Dog-Face tells me, "but he's wastin' time when he's mixin' juice fer th' weddin' feast."

"What's th' answer?" I asts him.

"They ain't goin' ta be no weddin'," he tells me. "Aggie says all bets is off."

"What's th' squawk?" I says. "Did you an' her have a clem so quick? Why couldn't ya wait till ya was married? Then ya could have Gettysburg forever."

"Aggie an' me ain't had no fight at all," Dog-Face says. "Th' squawk is that some low-down, gutter-born snake-in-th'-grass has copped her bridal veil."

Then Dog-Face puts me hep that this veil is one of them family heirlooms. Aggie's mother draped it over her mush when she got hooked up; so did th' gran'-mother an' th' rest of th' push fer a hundred years or more.

Aggie is superstitious; she gives th' weddin' stuff a quick curtain because she's got it doped that she's booked fer a bundle of bad luck if she gets hooked up without that particular piece of muskeeter nettin' draped over her dome.

"So it looks like somebody gummed th' works," I says ta Dog-Face. "Where'd she have th' dry-goods anyway? Did somebody twist her trunk fer it?"

"Nix," says Dog-Face. "Her trunk wasn't jimmied. She took th' veil out this mornin' ta give it th' air. It was hangin' on a guy-rope near th' dressin'-room an' some frog-eyed guerrilla joined it out."

"Cheer up, ole scout," I tells him. "Everythin' is okay; let th' weddin' bells ring out."

"What da ya mean, let th' weddin' bells ring out?" he asts me. "Ya know where th' veil is?"

"You said a forkful," I says. "It's over at th' juice-joint."

Then I ease it to him how th' wind must 've blowed th' dry-goods off th' guy-rope—blew it right inta th' juice-joint, I tells him, because I don't want ta get Red in wrong with Aggie. Dog-Face is so happy that he looks like he'd wag his tail if he had one. He dashes off ta break th' glad tidin's ta Aggie an' I sprint over ta th' joint an' put Red hep ta what's come off.

"Red," I tells him, "ya got a head on yere shoulders that reminds me of a case-note—a dollar."

"How's that?" he asts me.

"One bone," I says. "Get busy an' wash that 'lace curtain' what ya strained them grapes with or Aggie th' Wild Woman will chew a few chunks from under yer collar."

W'ile Red is givin' a correct imitation of a Chinaman workin' overtime, I give him an earful about th' veil an' how I squared him by givin' Dog-Face a bum steer about th' wind h'istin' it off th' guy-rope.

Of course, I was figurin' that Red could wash that blame piece of nettin' an' dry it in a coupla hours, but right here is where I got ta tell th' world I don't know no more about bridal veils than a rabbit knows about shoeing a horse. It seems that after ya strain grapes through a white veil, it leaves purple stains that won't never come out.

Red scrubs fer half an hour. I had ta leave him then because I see Aggie comin' toward th' joint an' she looked like she'd been eating "fierce an' poisonous reptiles" with a side-dish of raw beef. I ain't dumb enough ta stick around when a jane has got an argament ta settle with a guy, because she's liable ta give me a bawl-out too jest fer bein' present.

I'm standin' over by th' ticket-wagon. I can't hear what's comin' off, but I can see okay. When Aggie gets an eyeful of what Red's been doin' with the family heirloom, she grabs a tin dipper an' bats him over th' dome till th' handle busts off.

He stands like a boob an' tries ta give her th' salve about it bein' a mistake. Aggie cops th' veil outa his mitts an' swipes it acrost his features. That kinda brings Red ta life, an' he throws his speed clutch inta high an' heads fer th' horse-tops.

Fer a while I think Aggie is goin' ta wreck th' joint; but she only kicked over a coupla tubs of juice an busted a few glasses before she left.

Like Shakespeare says, "The worst is yet ta come." Aggie pours a sob story inta th' Old Man's lug. Th' Old Man glides over ta th' juice joint an' th' things he says ta Red makes th' grass shrivel up an' turn brown. Among th' things what he tells Red is:

"Th' bone stuff you pull around this trick is enough ta make a bulldog bust his chain. Here we've been advertisin' this freak weddin' fer a coupla weeks; th' yaps in th' thickets fer miles around is all steamed up over it. Then along comes a red headed guerrilla what is numb from th' Adam's apple upward an' he crimps th' play, when everythin' is runnin' smooth like a taximeter.

"But we're goin' ta go through with that weddin'," th' Old Man says ta Red, "even if it's only a fake. Th' girls round th' show will stake ya ta a layout of sheclothes an' *you* are goin' sub fer Aggie in th' lion-cage ta-night."

"Have a heart, gov'ner!" Red squawks. "I don't want ta be married ta that Dogface freak fer th' rest of my young life. He's half-man an' half-dog; I'm liable ta get fleas offen him, an' maybe hydraphobia."

"You're a fine little guy ta spill that hydraphobia word," says th' Old Man. "Hydraphobia is a bit of Greek chatter what means 'fear of water.' You've been leary about water ever since I'd knowed ya. Th' nearest you ever get ta water is when we cross a bridge. As fer you ever catchin' hydraphobia, it's a mistake; you've got it now. So that alibi can run fer Sweeney.

"You've got ta square me with th' natives ta-night an' go ta th' post in Aggie's place. If ya don't, I'll run ya offen th' lot an' queer ya so bad with other shows that they wouldn't have ya on the' grounds if ya had a reserved seat ticket."

After th' Old Man declares himself, he oozes outa th' joint w'ile Red is fillin' th' summer breeze with all kinds of squawks about "marryin'" Dog-Face.

"Th' ash-can fer that chatter," I tells him. "Ya poor fish, you're dumber than I ever give ya credick fer bein'. This is only a phony weddin'. Ain't ya hep that two guys can't really marry each other? Ain't ya got no edjucation whatsoever?"

Red gets thick as a plank an' tells me he's got jest as good edjucation as me.

"Ya might have been *exposed* ta edjucation," I tells him, "but it didn't *take*, as th' doctors say when they're talking about somethin' that's ketchin'. In other words, Red, you're immune."

"Well," says Red, "you might have th' right dope about this weddin' being' phony, but even so I don't see where you get off at ta bawl me about my edjucation. Nobody ain't never seen your name on a wall motto yet."

"They've got a good chance of seein' your monniker under 'Male Situations Wanted,'" I tells Red, "unless ya do like th' Old Man says an' go ta th' post fer Aggie."

"Th' Old Man can go direct ta th' blinkin' blue blazes," says Red. "I'll blow this outfit right now."

I see that I got ta tackle Red from a different angle an' slip him th' oil. (We oughta have some of that slow, "Liza-Crossin'-th'-Ice" music ta go with this stuff.)

"Red," I says, "you an' me is pals. I've stuck with you, right or wrong, because I picked you fer bein' white. Are ya goin' ta show yaller, now? Once before I picked a pal who tossed me—she sold out to a guy with a tin lizzie. You ain't goin' ta dog it like a canary-colored 'light o' love,' are ya, Red?"

"Not w'ile I'm conscious, Slim," he tells

me. "I was jest thinkin' of quittin' th' show. I ain't goin' ta double-cross ya like that canary sweetheart of yours. I'll go ta th' post fer Aggie. I'll be lettin' myself in fer some kiddin' from th' bunch, but I'll stand th' gaff."

"Thataboy, Red!" I says. "I knew ya wasn't in th' canary class; they ain't as much yaller in you, Red, as they is in stove polish."

If ya could of taken a slant under th' side-wall that night when th' bunch was framin' Red like a bride, you'd of rolled in th' grass an' laffed your head off. Me an' th' Property Man bales him up in a set of corsets what th' Bearded Lady came acrost with. They is two more guys tryin' ta squeeze his dogs inta a pair of white satin slippers. All round th' joint is heaps of she-rags; every jane in th' outfit came to the front with somethin' in th' line of clothes.

When we gets him about half dressed th' girls comes in ta finish th' job. They arranges his wig and paints an' powders his map. Red don't squawk until they smear some carmine slum on his lips. He says it makes his cigarettes taste like burnt rags, an' he makes a move ta wipe his chops on his sleeve.

Then th' Mitt-Reader lets out one of them "fireman-save-me-child!" screeches an' grabs Red's arm. Ya can't blame th' jane because he's wearin' a white dress what belongs ta her an' she don't want that carmine slum wiped on her sleeve.

Red hands me his pants an' asts me ta keep cases on them because his bank-roll is in them. Then th' janes drape some nettin' over his bean an' he asts me how he looks.

"Deary," I tells him, "you're perfectly stunnin'."

"Slough that 'deary' stuff," he growls, "an' give me th' level-up dope. Do I look okay?"

"Don't worry about looks, Red," I tells him. "You're decorated like an Easter egg an' as fer style, why, kid, Fifth Avenooe is an alley. Are ya nervous, Red? Brides is supposed ta be nervous."

"Sure I'm nervous," he tells me. "I jest stepped on a peanut shell an' I shivered all over. Wish I had a slug of whisky. Leave us take them pants a minute, Slim, an' I'll pack in a chew before I go ta th' post."

I leaves Red take th' pants; he takes his chew an' drifts out when th' band starts some of that "Here-Comes-th'-Bride" music.

Red an' Dog-Face climb inta the lion-cage. Outside th' bars is a justice of th' peace. He's a hick, if they ever was one—long black coat what shines like glass, steel-rimmed cheaters, an' whiskers what th' birds could build nests in.

Red is nervous, they ain't no two ways about that; I could tell from th' way he was chewin' tabacco. When Red chews, his ears an' th' whole top of his dome moves, an' from th' way th' bridal veil was seesawing, Red was chewin' a mile a minute.

Take it from me, even if I don't know a bookful of etiqutte, brides shouldn't oughta chew tabacco.

Everythin' was runnin' smooth till th' J. P. asts Red does "she" take Dog-Face fer her lawful wedded husband. Red must've fergot where he was or maybe it was because he never was a bride before. Anyways, he lifts th' veil, squirts out a flood of tabacco juice, an' tells the J. P., "You said it!"

Th' six lions in th' cage was grouped around Red an' Dog-Face. This weddin' stunt was old stuff with th' big cats because th' press-agent pulled it whenever he could get a coupla suckers ta go ta the post. Th' cats wasn't givin' nobody a tumble, was jest sittin' like they was made outa stone, till Red lifted his veil an' then things began to occur.

If ya happen ta know a guy what runs a "Daily Health Hint" column, ya can stake him ta this one: "Never squirt tabacco juice in a lion's glim." Ya, that's what Red did, of course he didn't do it on purpose, but Leo don't know that. All th' cat knows is that he's got somethin' in his glim what stings like a hatful of hornets an' he loses his goat an' starts a roughhouse.

Oi yoi! Will I ever ferget it!

Red an' Dog-Face come outa that cage like when ya get th' bum's rush in a water-front café an' land on th' car-tracks.

They make such a hasty exit that they ferget ta close th' door an' th' cats comes out like bees outa th' hive.

The yap audience all try ta make th' gate at th' same identical moment. Result: squawks, jam, fights. After firin' a few blank cartridges, th' keepers round up all th' cats except Leo.

When Leo tore out through th' sidewall, Red was about six feet ahead of him. Red had th' she-rags hoisted up around his belt an' was hittin' a mile-a-minute gait fer th' timbers.

It was about midnight when we found Leo. He was soakin' his eye in th' river. Red was nowheres in sight, an' we pulls outa th' burg without him.

Next mornin' I has my troubles bright an' early. Why? On account of them she-rags what Red is wearin'. I'm his partner an' every jane what leave Red take some of her clothes comes ta me with her squawk.

I hands them th' old salve an' tells them that I know that it's kinda tough on clothes to be tearin' round through swamps an' brambles like Red has most likely been doin'. And I also tells th' janes that if Red has crimped their wardrobe, he'll be a game guy an' come forward with damages.

When th' janes gets through tellin' me how much th' rags set them back, I figure that Red has a good chance of goin' on th' nut fer about a hundred an' fifty iron boys.

About ten bells that same mornin', a barefoot kid comes up ta th' juice-joint an' wises me that they is some kind of a strange animal hidin' in a shanty 'bout half a mile down th' track.

"Has it got woman's clothes an' red hair?" I asts th' kid.

"Yuh," says th' kid.

"What does it want?" I asts next

"Men's clothes," th' kid tells me, "'specially pants."

I gather up a layout of he-clothes an' th' kid steers me to th' shanty.

Th' minute I rests my glims on Red I see where he's got ta dent th' bank-roll ta square himself with th' girls. Most of th' bridal make-up is missin' an' what's left is crimped forever.

He tells me he flopped in ta th' river, got mired in a swamp, finally lost hisself in th' dark an' slept on a pile of pine needles fer th' rest of th' night. When daylight came, he swung onta a freight an' a good-natured shack let him ride in an empty coal-car.

Can ya pitcher how th' bridal layout looked after that session?

I gives him th' north an' south; I thinks of all that's come off in twenty-four hours an' then I says:

"Red, you're my pal. I'm with ya, right or wrong, but I gotta tell ya somethin' or I'll bust.

"I used ta think you was just a common, ordinary boob when it came ta gettin' inta bother, but, Red, I got ta hand it to you, you're th' champean of th' world!"

To Locomotive Lovers

We've got a treat for you in next week's *Railroad Man's Magazine*. It's a great yarn about a locomotive that was jealous when her driver began to cast longing glances at a pretty girl. If you've ever pulled the latch or pushed the Johnson Bar down in the corner you'll read it with breathless interest. Keep your eagle eye peeled for

The Romance of the 718

BY H. KEITH TRASK

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

THE PEARL OF TAO TAO.

BY H. P. HOLT AND RALPH HENRY BARBOUR.

Pluck Wins Through and Keith Finds the Most Beautiful Pearl in the South Seas.

A FIVE-PART STORY—PART FOUR.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

FROM the day they sailed, Captain Murdock, of the tramp steamer Four Winds, and his mate had been quarreling. Then one night, while they were in the South Seas, after a fight that left the skipper stretched out on his cabin floor, the mate slipped over the rail, determined to risk a long swim in the shark infested waters rather than stand trial on a charge of murder.

He landed on the island of Tao Tao just in time to save an English girl from attack by Baloo, a "bad" native laborer. She told him that she was Joan Trent, and that her brother, Chester, who with her owned the island plantation, was visiting a disreputable Portuguese trader, Moniz, on the neighboring island of Tamba. "My name is—is Keith," the castaway told her awkwardly.

Joan also told him that her brother was madly interested in pearling on a reef three miles off the island, and had been neglecting the plantation, that their affairs were in bad shape, and that she had reason to fear trouble with the native plantation hands. That night, while he was in bed, Keith was attacked, but his assailant got away in the darkness.

When Chester returned the next day it was evident that he had been drinking. He told them that Moniz was trying to get in on the pearling, and that he had induced two of Chester's native divers to desert him. That night there was a storm, and the plantation was badly damaged. The next morning they saw Moniz's schooner heading for the pearl-reef. They headed him off in Chester's boat, and, after a fight, drove him away.

Chester showed Keith two fine pearls that had come from the reef, and then concealed them in his room. So that he would be free to continue the pearling, he asked the castaway to take charge of the plantation, an offer that Keith accepted. Then Chester started to get new divers.

While Chester was away Moniz came to the island and tried to make peace, but Keith drove him off. Keith realized that he was in love with Joan, and before him arose a vision of the captain of the Four Winds stretched out on his cabin floor.

When Chester returned with the divers he at once started pearling. But only one large pearl rewarded his efforts. Nothing was heard of Moniz, but Isa, the diver who did not desert, was thought to be in his pay.

Chester needed money to continue the pearling. Without telling Keith he sailed for Tamba to try to borrow money from the Portuguese. Joan and Keith followed him in a whaleboat. Keith found that the Portuguese had plied him with liquor, and saved him from signing an agreement that would have meant the loss of the plantation.

They returned to Tao Tao, and that night Keith heard some one in his room. He awakened Chester and they found the house empty, but some one had made a careful search of it. They learned that Isa and Baloo had run away, and the next day captured and punished them. That night the two blacks escaped.

The next day Keith was ill with a fever. A British gun boat came to the island and Chester invited the officers to luncheon. With them came Steel, who was looking for a plantation investment. Chester offered to sell him Tao Tao, and told him of the pearls, but when he went to get the two large ones he had concealed they were gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DELIRIUM.

WITH eyes blazing, he strode toward the veranda, but at sight of the officers he pulled up sharply. If he were not careful he might give the impression that he suspected one of his guests.

Keith, who was beginning to collapse under the effects of fever, had been urged by the doctor to take to his bed, and he met Chester at the doorway.

"I say, Keith—" the planter began; but the man from the Four Winds passed him with unseeing eyes. He was moving mechanically, knowing nothing but the fact that he must get under the blankets.

Chester helped him to undress.

"You'll stop there till I tell you to get up this time, old man," the planter declared, "or else we shall be having a corpse on our hands."

Keith looked at his host curiously.

"How do you feel now?" Chester asked, when he had covered the sick man up.

"It's a lie!" said Keith in a strange voice. "Starboard a bit. Why, that must be Sandy Hook Light! Didn't know we were so near. Starboard, I said, thick-head.

"One of these days you'll get your block knocked off, like Murdock did. Stone-dead he was. I hate killing men, Gibbs. They don't stop dead, darn them.

"Murdock was an obstinate pig when he was alive, and he's too obstinate to stay in his grave now, eh? Oh, no. Of course. He was dumped overboard, as you say.

"Well, why can't he stay there, instead of fooling around on Tao Tao? Think I must have got a touch of fever, Gibbs.

"Hold her on that course a while. I'm going below for a dose of quinin."

Chester listened, and frowned, perplexed. Then he stole out of the room and fetched the doctor.

"Can't do a thing till the sweat comes," declared Pills. "Keep him well covered up, though, and I expect he'll pull through all right. They generally do."

"Generally, eh? Do you think there's a doubt about it, doctor?"

"Not exactly. He's pretty bad, though. Guess I can persuade the old man to keep his hook down here till to-morrow.

"The ship's in no hurry. Probably your patient will be better by then."

"Joan," said her brother quietly, a few minutes later, "you'd better nurse Keith a while. I'll take it on as soon as these fellows go. He's pretty bad and—Joan—something else has happened—"

"What is it?" asked the girl, deeply concerned. It was only too clear to her that Chester had received a shock. He spoke in a quick, nervous manner, and in spite of the tan on his face he had paled a little.

"The pearls have vanished. But don't worry about it just now," Chester said kindly. "It's nothing desperate, at any rate."

"I'm sorry," the planter went on a moment later, addressing Steel, as he subsided into a chair by the visitor's side. "I can't lay my hands on those pearls for the minute."

"So!" replied Steel thoughtfully. There was a tinge of suspicion in the way he said it, and an indefinable change crept into his manner.

It was on the strength of those pearls that were to have been produced, that he had made a tentative offer to enter into a partnership. Chester noticed the effect of his announcement, but he did not blame Steel.

"It's deuced awkward. Sounds like a variety of the confidence trick, doesn't it?" he said with a forced laugh, though a frown hung on his forehead.

"Why, no," replied Steel politely. "It just occurred to me that I'd be willing to make a speculation if you'd got decent samples to show, though, of course, if you haven't it isn't—er—it isn't so attractive, is it?"

"Naturally," agreed Chester. "It's a nuisance, though. I'd rather you didn't say anything about it, but the pearls have been stolen."

Steel flicked the ash from the end of his cigar, but otherwise he did not move for a moment.

"Indeed!" he said at last. "Since when?"

He did not wish to appear discourteous to his host, but the story sounded a little fishy.

"Since this morning," Chester declared. "I know you think it queer, and I shouldn't have told you but for our previous conversation. Some of the niggers have got at the things, I expect, though how on earth they knew where to look for them is more than I can understand.

"I really was awfully glad at the idea of having you join me, but let's forget it," he added, as though determined to dismiss the subject from his mind.

Steel cast a searching glance at the other man. He was puzzled. From the first he had taken a liking to Chester.

He was more than half inclined to believe him now, although pearls do not disappear, as a rule, in such places as Tao Tao. In the course of his wanderings through

the South Seas he had met some queer customers, ready to play tricks of every imaginable kind.

He decided, however, that Chester was no trickster. Steel was sympathetic, yet, in the circumstances, no business deal was possible.

"Look here," he said, "we've got a husky bunch of fellows ashore, all dying for a bit of excitement. I'm quite sure they'd do anything in their power to help you, and they'd enjoy doing it. Why not let us round up every nigger on the place and "

"No, no, forget it. Thanks all the same The pearls will be hidden by now. It's just the culminating point.

"Every single thing that could go wrong has gone wrong lately. There's a regular landslide comes in the affairs of all men sooner or later, Mr. Steel. Mine's under way. I shouldn't be in the least surprised to see the blooming roof fall in now.

"The only satisfaction I have about it all is that it's due to my own folly to a large extent—the landslide, I mean, not this latest phase of it. I ought to be kicked all the way from here to Hong Kong and then kicked back again.

"There's that about the atmosphere of the Pacific which demoralizes a fellow unless he's careful. There's an insidious something that comes over you without your knowing it."

"True enough," Steel agreed.

"True! Don't I know it? I was going straight to the bow wows a few months ago, and letting everything slide. Heaven knows things were sliding fast enough on their own account, without me helping.

"Then this man, Keith, came here, and after a few days, when he got the hang of things, he read me a sort of curtain lecture—not too much, you know, but just sufficient to show me that I was ten different kinds of a fool Pretty decent of him, too, because it wasn't any affair of his, and you're more likely to get kicked than thanked if you float around in these latitudes reading temperance lectures."

"Where did he bob up from?" Steel asked

"Floated ashore, like a merman, straight out of the sea."

"Floated? You mean in a boat?"

"Boat nothing. He swam here. Fell overboard somewhere off Tao Tao, and the steamer didn't stop, so he had to swim or drown."

Steel nodded, but whatever thoughts he had he kept them to himself.

Before the little party returned to the war-ship Pills promised to take a run ashore next morning, to see his patient, and he turned up immediately after dawn in his pajamas and a dressing-gown, the old man having given him just twenty minutes grace, as he had decided to sail almost immediately.

Pills brought a bundle of newspapers which were of comparatively recent date, having been passed on to the Petrel by a steamer not long out of Sydney.

Keith's fever was somewhat allayed.

"He may be all right now, if you look after him carefully," the doctor declared. "I've brought you a couple of bottles of medicine that should help him a bit.

"Good-by. Awfully sorry I can't stop any longer, but if I don't scoot now there'll be a shindy."

A minute later he was flying down the path, with his dressing-gown blowing in the breeze. There came a farewell toot on the siren of the Petrel, and soon she was disappearing away to the south, leaving only a long, black trail of smoke behind.

But Keith's rally had only been temporary. Within a few hours his temperature was soaring. Death was knocking at his very door. Joan fought for his life as well as she could, but under such primitive conditions there was not much that she could do.

"Chester, have you have you ever seen a man die of malaria?" she asked her brother tremulously when Keith was worse than ever.

"Why, no—that is, I've never seen a man die of fever," he replied, "though they do die sometimes, you know."

"I wish I had seen it," the girl declared. "Then I might know how much chance there is for—him."

Joan's delicate skin was ashen, and in her eyes there was a light which neither Chester nor any man had seen before.

Chester stared at her, only half understanding. Something that he had never dreamed, never suspected, was beginning to dawn upon him.

Keith was lying still, moaning occasionally. His great frame seemed to have shrunk. His drawn face was a travesty of what it had been.

Chester looked down at the man and then at his sister.

"Are you scared—I mean are you really very much afraid that he might go?" he asked gently.

Joan did not answer in words, for words would not come to her just then. She shook her head, as though determined to oppose the very idea of Keith dying, but tears welled into her eyes.

Then Chester understood.

"He will take an awful lot of killing," he said, reassuringly. "A man with his constitution can look over the very brink and come back a dozen times.

"I wish now that I knew more about such things, but, honestly, sis, I believe you're more alarmed than is necessary."

Chester was not saying what he believed, but what he thought would comfort the girl.

Suddenly Keith, who had not spoken for hours, made a weak attempt to rise on to his elbow and fixed his burning eyes on an imaginary person in the room.

"Listen here," he said in hollow tones, moistening his parched lips with his tongue, "I tell you you're dead, Murdock. Can't you let a man alone for a while?"

Then he paused, as though listening to some reply.

"You belong in hell," he went on a few moments later. "Go back home, where I sent you. What's that, Gibbs? Yes, I know we shall make a bum trip. It's rotten coal we've got in the bunkers. Australian always is.

"I don't believe we're doing more than seven knots at this minute, and Heaven have mercy on our souls if a typhoon strikes us. When I see the skipper I'll tell him—oh, yes, I keep forgetting he's a dead 'un.

"There he is again, curse him! Murdock, for the love of Mike, leave me in peace—"

In a flash his manner changed. A look that might have been cunning came into his face.

"I suppose," he said slowly, and with strange deliberation—"I suppose it's those two pearls you're after, eh, Murdock? I know. I can read your mind. Yes, if it gives you any satisfaction to hear it, I've got 'em, but they're not for you.

"A pretty pair, they are, too. It's no use looking like that. You don't want pearls in hell, Murdock. Get out of this, or"—his face lighted up with anger once more—"or I'll crack your skull again."

The paroxysm had burned itself out. Keith sank back limp and shivering, with his eyes closed.

Chester, listening, had been biting his lips. He turned round slowly to his sister with raised eyebrows, but Joan's gaze remained on the patient.

Chester drummed the ends of his fingers on the edge of a table.

"That's—that's not what I should have expected of him," he said at last to his sister, in a low voice.

"Expected! What do you mean?" the girl asked.

Chester jerked his head in the direction of the patient.

"You heard what he said."

"But, Chester," the girl expostulated, "he is delirious. You don't mean that you suspect—"

"I hate to say it, my dear girl, especially when he's down and out, but it looks to me as though he'd let the cat out of the bag unconsciously."

"But think, Chester! You know him well enough to be sure he couldn't do a thing like that—"

"I know it isn't the sort of thing I should have expected of him," the planter said a trifle more bitterly, "but I know I didn't remove the pearls, and you didn't. There were three human beings on the face of the earth who knew where the cache was, and Keith was the third

"Even supposing a black had known the pearls were in that room, the hole in the beam was covered so carefully that he might have hunted all day there without getting them. I didn't like to suspect Keith before,

but now I have heard it from his own lips there's no alternative."

"I am sure—perfectly convinced—you are wrong," Joan declared obstinately. "At least you must remember that he was delirious when he said it, and no man should be held accountable for what he says at such times."

"I'm sorry," her brother said, "but under the circumstances I am bound to believe the evidence of my own eyes and ears."

Joan opened her lips to reply, but did not speak. It was obvious even to her that Chester's point of view was an eminently logical one, one which it was impossible for her to combat with mere words. And yet she felt certain there was some explanation that would be forthcoming.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE END OF THE ROPE

BETWEEN periods of extreme weakness, when life barely flickered within the man from the Four Winds, he spoke incoherently of many things, as his tortured brain jumped from one vivid moment in his past to another. There were times when he referred to a girl with strange, greenish eyes.

Sometimes he addressed her directly, as Eileen: but it was not in the language of love that he spoke—rather was it as a youngster in his teens might banter with a girl. Once he adopted quite a fatherly tone toward Eileen.

Joan was sitting by his bedside. Keith was addressing an imaginary figure at the foot of the bed.

"I've often thought of you," he said seriously. "It's many a year since you and I used to have good times together. 'Member that day in the orchard when you fed me with cherries, and you fought like a cat as soon as I tried to kiss you?

"I'd just got back from my first voyage, and you'd switched over to some other fellow. I can't remember his name, though. Did you ever marry him? Didn't you, really? Stop laughing."

Keith was smiling now.

"You always did take everything as a joke. Oh, yes, I remember now, you did marry him, but you didn't last long. Pneumonia, or something of the kind, they told me."

The man ceased talking abruptly, and Joan drew the coverlet up a little higher over him. To stay there and listen to such intimate memories seemed to her terribly like eavesdropping, but she could not leave him unattended.

During her long vigil, though, Joan obtained a certain degree of satisfaction in reflecting that it was some other man the girl with the greenish eyes had married.

Then, at times, Keith spoke more or less rationally about pearls, and particularly about the two large pearls On one such occasion Joan was lying down in her own room, Chester having relieved her at her post. Keith spoke to himself rather than to some third person.

"They're worth a good deal," he was saying. "Funny thing to me that Trent didn't get any more like 'em, but they'd fetch enough to keep a man out of trouble for a while."

Chester leaned forward curiously. He had searched in every nook and corner of the house, including that room, for the missing pearls, without success, and had come to the conclusion that after removing them from the hole in the beam Keith must have deposited them somewhere out of doors.

"Where did you put them?" Chester asked deliberately, hoping the sick man, taken off his guard, might give away the secret of their hiding-place. Keith, however, took no notice.

"Where did you put those pearls?" Chester persisted.

For a moment or two the sailor's mind was clearer.

"Put what?" he asked, looking surprised.

"The pearls you took out of the beam?" Chester said slowly.

A cunning smile spread over the sick man's face.

"That's what Murdock would like to know," he replied. "Lots of people want to know that. I can't tell you, though. It's a secret, see?"

Chester's face darkened. There was no shred of doubt now that it was Keith who had taken the pearls—his pearls, practically the only fruit he had reaped after all his expense and labor at the reef.

It was maddening to have a semiconscious man taunt him about it, but he could press the matter no further, for Keith's mind wandered off to other subjects.

The change came at dawn two days later. Keith had lain at death's door all night. Fearing the end was approaching, Joan and her brother had taken turns by his side.

Twice the girl thought he had ceased to breathe. And then came the great sweat. Not long after that Keith was sleeping, peacefully as a child, and the girl knew that his life had been spared.

Chester Trent made no reference to the subject of the pearls for a few days, until Keith, who made a rapid recovery, was fast becoming his old self again. The planter waited until one afternoon when he and Keith were sitting on the veranda smoking, while Joan was busy with needlework

Chester purposely chose a moment when his sister was there to broach the subject, so that whatever was said should be said in her presence.

"By the way, Keith," he began, biting hard on the end of a cigar and fixing his eyes on the sailor, "what do you know about those pearls we hid in my bedroom?"

"Why, as I told you before," Keith replied, gazing out unconcernedly over the vast expanse of ocean, "in my opinion they're not anything very special, but they ought to fetch a good price if you can get them to the right market."

His eyes had never left the course of a far distant gull as he spoke, and there was not the slightest hesitation in his manner. Joan had let her sewing fall to her lap and had awaited his reply with undisguised interest.

For more than one reason it was not easy for Chester to frame his next question. There was a momentary pause. Keith left the gull to pursue its lonely course unobserved, and glanced round.

Both Chester and Joan were looking intently at him. Some instinct seemed to tell him that everything was not as it should be

"What's wrong?" he asked quickly.

"Let me tell him, Chester," said the girl. "Mr. Keith, some one has taken them away."

"Stolen them?" Keith ejaculated

"They've disappeared, anyway," put in Chester.

Keith rose to his feet with a puzzled expression.

"Why—let me see—" he began

He swung round, and entering the bungalow, made for the planter's room, striding straight to the beam where the cache had been. Chester was at his heels

"I took them, Trent," said Keith bluntly. "I remember now. It seems weeks ago—anyhow I only remember it in a hazy kind of way."

"I know you did," replied Chester

"When was it?"

"The day the officers came from the Petrel."

"How did you know I took them?"

"You and I put a little wedge in the beam, and inked it on one side, you remember, so that it would not show. I found that wedge on your bedroom floor."

Keith nodded

"I must have dropped it there," he said.

"Besides that, while you were delirious you spoke several times of having taken them. Where are they?"

"I don't know," replied the man from the Four Winds, slowly. "It happened when the fever had a grip on me. I fancy I had an idea—yes, I'm sure I had—that some one was going to take the things

"You know what silly notions you get into your head when the malaria is biting you. Now, what in thunder—yes, I left you all on the veranda, to get some quinin, and I've a dreamy sort of recollection of trying to get that wedge out with my nails—"

"Yes, yes," said Chester anxiously. "What did you do then?"

"Trent, I'm darned if I know," the sailor replied frankly. "Maybe it 'll come to me, but at present I can't remember another thing about it. I only know I was

full of the idea that they were going to be stolen, and I thought I'd get ahead of the thief."

Joan had followed her brother into the room and listened intently to every word.

"You were talking to the ship's doctor after that," she said. "Do you think you gave them to him?"

Keith shook his head.

"No. In the first place he would probably have said something to you about it if I had, and in the second place I do know I was obsessed with the thought that I must protect them somehow.

"Of course, there's no telling what a man who isn't in his right mind might do, but I should think the last thing that I was likely to do under the circumstances was to give them away."

"It was unfortunate," commented the planter.

"It was very unfortunate, Trent," Keith replied, with a look straight into the other man's eyes. "They're bound to turn up, though, when we make a thorough search."

"I've been through the place with a fine-toothed comb," Chester said. "There isn't the least trace of them anywhere."

Keith was already ransacking his pockets in vain.

"Unless I threw them away, which I can't conceive possible, they must be somewhere," he said. "Now leave me alone for a while. I'm going to look for them my own way."

For two hours he hunted in every part of the bungalow where it would have been possible for two such small objects to be secreted. Considering his own room to be the most likely hunting ground, he first rummaged into every crack in the walls, floor and ceiling there. Then he subjected each of the other rooms to a similar scrutiny until finally he had to confess himself beaten.

"It's no good," he said to the planter. "They're gone, and it begins to look to me as though there was precious little hope of ever seeing the things again.

"We reckoned they were worth fully two thousand dollars, and from now on I shall consider myself in debt to you for that amount, though, as far as I can judge from my present finances, it 'll be some considerable time before you're paid."

"Don't look at it in that way, please," said Chester, "though it's true they were my sheet anchor—my last hope. There's only the Kestrel left now, and if I sold her we should be utterly stranded."

"It is possible," said Joan, "that they might yet turn up—hidden away in some totally unexpected place. You know how things are found sometimes in the most unlikely corners."

"It's possible," agreed Chester, with an attempt to be civil in trying circumstances, "but it doesn't sound to me likely."

Keith shook his head.

"I'm afraid," he said, "very much afraid, that's the end of them. I have a dim sort of notion—so dim that it is more than likely to be imagination—that I did something with them which put my mind at rest on the subject for the time.

"And as they're not in the house I might have hidden them out of doors, in which case the hunt would be hopeless."

"It couldn't have cropped up at a more inopportune moment," Chester said reflectively. "That chap Steel was perfectly willing to come into partnership with me, at least so far as the pearling was concerned. Anyway, he was willing to make me a decent cash offer for all the pearls I had."

"It's no use me making apologies," said Keith. "I'd do a lot at this minute if I could restore the things to you, though even then it would be too late for you to fix up the partnership.

"I'm sorry, terribly sorry, Trent. My only excuse is that I hadn't the faintest notion of what I was doing."

Chester's feelings had passed through a variety of stages on the subject. First anger and disappointment, then suspicion, natural enough in the circumstances

He walked over to the sailor and gave him a friendly pat on the back.

"Keith, think no more about it," he said; and the subject was dropped.

During the last week or so operations on the plantation had been carried out as a mere form of routine. The blacks had dozed and idled over their work, with no

driving force behind them, especially while Keith was ill, and Chester appeared to be losing interest in the place altogether, though that was largely because his mind was fully occupied with the problem of how he was to carry it on at all. Joan tried gently to stir up renewed enthusiasm in him, but was not very successful.

"I feel I'm in a regular hole, sis," he declared, "and there's no way out of it, as far as I can see. To go on with the work on Tao Tao is almost like flogging a dead horse, but not quite, and that's the worst of it.

"If I had enough capital I'd sell this concern outright for whatever it would fetch and start all over again somewhere else, with a different kind of land"

"Well, well," said Joan, "we've made our bed and I suppose we shall have to lie in it. Don't you think, Chester, we could manage to scrape through for another year or so until the money begins to come in?"

"I've been wondering lately," the planter replied, "whether it would be possible for me to get some sort of an advance to carry me over from one of the big copra buyers in Manila, if I guaranteed to let them market my stuff.

"I know such things are done, and I could make Manila safely enough in the Kestrel, but even if I found a firm who would be willing to do business they wouldn't take my word about what we had on Tao Tao."

"Couldn't they send a representative down?"

"I expect they'd probably laugh at me if I suggested it," Chester said. "You see, it's such a deuce of a distance.

"I must churn that idea over, though. Something's got to be done, anyhow. We can't stay here and starve."

That night Chester Trent lay awake for hours after the other occupants of the bungalow had gone to sleep. He felt that the position into which he had drifted was rapidly becoming desperate, and nothing remained but the trip to Manila.

Long after he had arrived at that conclusion he continued to toss and turn in bed, for his brain was still active and wild-cat schemes were chasing one another through it. Midnight had long passed when he rose restlessly and stared out of the window into the night.

There was no moon, and even the tropic stars were dimmed by low-lying clouds. Everywhere there was deathly stillness, for the night breeze was too gentle even to cause a rustling among the leaves.

"Oh, my hat!" he exclaimed, half aloud, and reached for a match with the intention of reading himself to sleep.

His fingers had barely closed on the box when he sound of many harsh voices struck his ears. It was an ominous, swelling chorus.

Chester's frame stiffened. For three seconds he held his head on one side in a listening attitude.

"Gosh!" he muttered. "The blacks!"

Turning, he sped swiftly to the bed and pulled his revolver from under the pillow.

CHAPTER XX

THE ATTACK.

A MOMENT later he had burst into his sister's room. The girl had already sprung out of bed, awakened by the cries of the blacks.

"What is it?" she cried anxiously.

"Get your gun, sis. There's trouble coming. They've surrounded the house, and by the sound of them they're out for blood. On with a dressing-gown. That's right."

"You there, Trent?"

It was Keith's voice. He was in the living-room.

"Don't strike a light! Stick plenty of cartridges in your pockets and give 'em lead"

"Best shove the shutters up at the back of the house," said Chester. "That may help—for a time at least. Come on."

Hurriedly the two men swung across the bedroom windows the heavy boards which had always been ready in case of such necessity. These were fastened with solid bars, rendering the windows nearly as impervious to attack as the walls. At the front of the house there was one large window looking out on to the veranda, and

here Chester and Keith stationed themselves.

A soft thud against the outside of the wall near Keith made him start back involuntarily.

"They're firing arrows," he said. "Don't expose yourself at the windows more than you can help or you may get hit with one of the rotten things."

"Joan, you'd better go into one of the other rooms," her brother ordered. "Ouch! Get back there!"

Another arrow, aimed in the darkness with better luck than the last, swished through the air within a foot of Chester's shoulder, and its barbed point sank deep into the wall near where the girl was standing.

They could not see the quivering object, but there was no mistaking what it was.

"You forget I can shoot as well as either of you," the girl replied in a voice that betrayed no sign of panic, "and if you think I'm going to take a back seat now you're mistaken."

It was no moment for argument. Moreover, what the girl said was true; and three armed people would be able to put up a better defense than two.

The cries of the blacks were swelling louder every moment as they worked themselves up into a frenzy for a massed attack. Already the yelping of some of the enemy, more adventurous than the rest, could be heard close to the house.

It was impossible to distinguish anything outside except the dim outline of the darkened sky against the still darker mass of trees.

"Do you suppose they are our own men?" Joan asked her brother

"Don't know," he said. "Maybe it's a crowd Baloo and Isa have raked in from some other island—ah—"

A shadowy form had appeared near the veranda and Chester shot at it three times in quick succession. There was a scream of pain, and at the sound of the shots there was a momentary lull in the roar of the attackers.

Aiming blindly, Keith emptied his revolver into the darkness, and the other two followed suit. Over a dozen bullets swept across the cleared space, and more than one shrill note of agony from the throat of savages told that some of the lead had gone home.

A minute later there came the sound of thunderous blows on the walls at the back of the house, and Keith, leaving the other two to guard the front, slipped into his own room. A loophole had been bored near the window, and from this he fired as fast as the trigger would work.

The attack in that quarter promptly subsided for a while. Chester and the girl were now firing furiously at the front of the house, and the sailor rushed to their assistance just in time to help in stemming an ugly rush

A dozen or more blacks had charged up the veranda steps, only to be met with a wilting stream of lead. Keith's arrival was none too soon, however, for by the time he had crammed fresh cartridges into his weapon, several of the blacks were close up to the house and the revolvers that Chester and Joan were wielding were empty.

The fusillade that Keith poured out was sufficient to turn the tide, and such of the blacks as had not been killed scrambled down into the compound.

"Are you both all right?" Keith asked sharply.

"I am, but look at Chester," the girl replied from her post at the window. "I think he got hurt then."

"I'll be there—with bells on—in half a minute," the planter said. "Something gave me a jolt on my shoulder.

"I think it must have been a club that was heaved at us. It made me see stars for a minute, though. Have they gone?"

"For the moment, but they'll be back," replied Keith. "There'll be things doing before we're through with this night's work.

"There they go behind the house again. Can you keep 'em off here while I go and attend to them?"

"I'll be all right," Chester said.

The pounding had become threatening. The men there were evidently trying to find a weak spot in which to break through while the attention of the defenders was fully occupied at the front. Keith returned

to his loophole and winged one, if not two, of the blacks.

Then, hastily reloading, he once more emptied the magazine, scattering the shots in every direction. It was a haphazard form of marksmanship, for there was no guide to Keith beyond the shouting, but it had the effect of temporarily driving the men clear of that part of the compound.

They soon returned to the attack, however, and this time used a heavy log as a battering ram on the side wall. There was no loophole or crevice in the building there, so they were able to pound away uninterruptedly, and soon the little building began to shake under the onslaught.

"They'll have the whole place down about our ears in another half hour," Keith said

"Well, let 'em, the beasts!" Chester replied. "We can only go on plugging holes in 'em to the finish, and this looks to me very much like the beginning of our finish."

Even as he spoke he punctuated his words with an occasional shot into the darkness in the direction of a shadowy form which might have been imagination or might not.

"I wouldn't mind so much if it weren't so infernally dark," the planter went on. "It's rough on a fellow not to have enough light to die in decently if he's got to die fighting. I say, Keith, what worries me is—"

At that moment there was a faint flicker of the moon, the thin crescent of which struggled to cast a pale glow through a break in the clouds down to the turbulent scene on Tao Tao.

The glow took unaware a black who had stealthily climbed the steps and was crouching with a heavy club ready to hurl it through the window.

There came the crack of two revolvers almost simultaneously, and the black leaped into the air, spun round, and fell backward.

"What worries me," Chester went on between his teeth, "is Joan's fate. Once they break the side of the place down they'll be able to swarm in, and that's going to happen mighty soon now."

"I shall shoot myself when the time comes," Joan declared simply. "After all, one can only die once."

"Don't be in too much of a hurry to do that," Keith jerked out. "I've got an idea.

"Listen. As it is we're trapped, and if we stay here the game will be up in a few minutes now. It's as dark as the grave outside The blacks may have started by surrounding the bungalow, but if I'm not mistaken they're now all at the front and round at the west side, where you can hear them yelling and thumping.

"The narrowest part of the compound is opposite Chester's bedroom. It's only about eight yards there from the wall of the house to the edge of the trees."

"That's right," agreed Chester. "If we could get her across there, there's a chance of making for the wilderness, or some other place, at least till daylight. Keith, you—you look after her, old man

"I'll stop here and make a big noise while you're making your getaway. And—I say, Keith, see that she has one cartridge in her gun -for the finish. Now, for Heaven's sake, get out of here, quick!"

The pounding had now doubled in intensity. Evidently the blacks, finding they could work there without interruption, had secured another log with which to batter the wall

"I shall not go, leaving you here to be killed, Chester," the girl said firmly.

"Go, Joan," her brother urged. "There isn't a moment to lose. There's one chance in twenty for you if you clear out now —"

"You go and remove the shutter in Chester's room," the girl said, touching Keith's arm. "I will stay here with him helping to shoot and draw the attention of the blacks to the front of the house until you are ready for us. Then we all three go together or else I shall stay behind."

There was a crashing noise where the enemy were loosening the planks. Seconds had become priceless.

With infinite caution, Keith removed the shutter. It was pitch dark outside. He could neither see nor hear anything near

"Come now," Keith said to them a moment later.

There was a wild yell of triumph from the eastern side of the bungalow as one of the battering rams burst through the wall.

Keith climbed through the bedroom window and helped Joan down to the ground outside.

Her brother leaped into the compound after them. They got half way across the clear space, moving swiftly and silently, when a black form, speeding as if shot from a catapult, cannoned into Keith, who was bowled over under the impact.

"Go on- go on!" he said hoarsely to his two companions. Chester and the girl, not knowing what was happening, went toward the shelter of the trees.

Keith, meanwhile, had grappled with the black sprawling near him. To prevent the man from bellowing, the sailor had slid his great hands up to his opponent's neck and with thumbs of steel was fast reducing the squirming creature into a state of unconsciousness.

His mind was wholly occupied with the grim task on which he was engaged, when there was the sound of scuffling near him and he knew that all was not well with his companions.

He had his knee firmly planted in the stomach of the black, who, however, was writhing desperately to escape the deadly clutch. It was sixty seconds, which seemed more like an eternity, before the form under Keith lay still and the victor began to relax his hold.

He was just preparing to jump to his feet when he became aware of the fact that another black was near. The sailor put his hand toward a knife in his belt when there came again a momentary pale gleam from the moon

Keith's hand had closed over the handle of the knife and he was within an instant of making a thrust with the blade.

"Marster Trent!" said a guttural voice.

"Who's that?" Keith asked suspiciously, delaying the blow which would have meant death to the black

"Me Peter Pan," the voice added.

"Mr. Trent was here just now. Where has he gone, eh?" Keith asked quickly.

"Come!" said the black, leading the way into the trees. The two men walked a little distance from the compound and then Peter Pan stopped abruptly.

"No can tell who dead," he declared. "Plenty heap big crowd black men come on ship."

"Where's Mr. Trent? Where's Miss Joan?" Keith asked in a fever of apprehension. He had thought Peter Pan was leading him to them, but Peter Pan, knowing nothing of the fate of those two, had been taking the sailor away from immediate danger.

"No can tell," replied the black. "Plenty blacks kill you quick if you stay here."

"I don't care," Keith replied wildly. "You stand by me, Peter Pan."

"You no go there," said Peter Pan. "Kill you, kill me. *Kai kai* both us."

Keith was realizing the utter hopelessness of his position. Never until that moment had he known how overwhelming was his love for Joan; and now, somewhere near him, in that bewildering blackness, she needed his help more than she had ever needed anything in her life.

He strained his ears but could detect nothing save the frenzied shouts of the blacks as they surged round the bungalow. He would have called out to her, but feared that she might be hiding, as he was, and that the sound might attract a horde of the savages toward her.

For his own life, at that moment, he had no concern. He would have died gladly had he thought that by drawing the attention of some of the blacks he would enable the girl to creep away. For a moment he stood still, staring into nothingness and racking his brain.

"I stop here," he said at length. "You go find Miss Joan. Then run back and tell me. Savvy?"

Peter Pan grunted to indicate that he understood, and vanished silently as a shadow. It was maddening for Keith to stay there, impotent, hearing the sound of smashing woodwork at the house and listening, every nerve taut, for the cry of a woman's voice, but he knew that he might serve her best by waiting until the friendly black returned with information as to her whereabouts.

If Peter Pan could find out nothing it was probable that she had got away. If she were in the hands of the savages Keith felt that he could at least reach her side.

There were two bullets still in his revolver. He had reserved them. It was better she should die that way.

The minutes dragged along like hours. Once there was a movement within a few feet of where Keith stood. He gripped his knife.

Two or three men were there, chattering excitedly, but they did not discover the sailor, and moved off. Keith's nerves were of iron, but the strain was beginning to tell on him. He felt an almost irresistible impulse to rush forward and stab savagely at every form he encountered in his path.

"Marster Keith!" It was Peter Pan calling softly, ten feet away.

Keith answered with a hissing sound.

"Miss Joan, she gone!" the black announced.

"Gone! Gone where?"

"Blacks all come along big Marster Moniz in schooner. Marster Trent, he no here.

"Maybe he dead. Miss Joan, she go along big Marster Moniz to schooner."

CHAPTER XXI.

MONIZ SQUARES ACCOUNTS.

THE arrival of his majesty's gunboat Petrel in that part of the Sulu Sea was a particularly awkward event for Vasco Moniz.

The Portuguese was a freebooter, with no pretense of a conscience, a vagabond of the South Seas who had lived in a score of ways by trickery, robbery, extortionate trading, and making illicit but highly profitable deals with the natives of various islands. He was a Pacific second-story man, differing from his city counterpart by the fact that he carried his life in his hands always, whether sleeping or waking, and that there was something of romance in his nomadic existence which appealed to his adventurous nature.

But it was not only the vengeance or savagery of the black that Moniz had occasion to dread. From Singapore to Manila, from Timur even to Saigon, the centers where white men congregate were practically all barred to him.

Moniz was a pariah, with the reputation of a thief—and worse. White men, by common consent, consider it the unforgivable sin to supply firearms to the blacks in some places.

A man sinks low before he sells trade gin indiscriminately, for under its fiery influence natives may attempt anything; but an armful of rifles with ammunition which, even though it may have been condemned as rotten, is as likely to go off as not, may cause many a white man's head to be smoke-dried and hung as a proud trophy in an island canoe house.

It was typical of Vasco Moniz that he clung always to his own name out of sheer bravado, though the hands of so many of his fellow beings were against him. Wily as a fox, slippery as an eel, he was prepared to elude capture at any time, as he had done in the past.

Crimes against the laws of communities and the laws of decency are soon allowed to slide into the limbo of the past in that strange, vast region south of the Philippines, unless the criminal has transgressed too far, and in that case there is no forgetfulness. It was gun-running to blacks in the Solomons which had placed Moniz beyond the pale, and more than one man, and a woman, would now have shot him on sight.

But Moniz had lain low after the disastrous consequences of what he had done. Eight white men were killed and a ketch was looted by Looana natives bearing rifles which it was known Moniz had supplied to them. And Moniz was aware that the shackles threatened whenever a British war-ship hove in sight, and not merely on account of his gun-running operations, either.

Always suspicious and alert, he was ready, when the gray hull of the Petrel hove in sight off Tamba, to learn that the wolves were on his track. He was aboard the schooner, lying off the point where his bungalow stood, when the Petrel's pinnace shot from the gunboat's side. It passed close to the schooner, and was heading for the beach near his home.

"Hello, there!" he hailed, waving his pith helmet.

The pinnace lost way and swung round.

"Howdy," the lieutenant in charge replied; and then followed a brief battle of wits. One or two guarded questions concerning Tamba were put by the lieutenant to which Moniz replied.

"Who's hanging out on the island now?" the lieutenant asked airily.

"One or two planters—there's a Swede named Svenk; there's Diaz; there was a chap called Angell, but he's gone west, and there's Vasco Moniz, a trader. His place is away on the other side"

The Portuguese watched the lieutenant as the latter stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"May I ask your name?" said the lieutenant in a suave tone

"My name's Haskell," the Portuguese replied glibly. "I've got a bit of a shack right here. Anything I can do for you?"

"Why, no," said the lieutenant. "You say Moniz's place is at the other side of the island, eh?"

"Yes, on the westernmost peak. If you go round there, keep well clear of the reef."

"Aye, aye," shouted back the officer. "Much 'bliged."

Then he gave an order and the little craft sped back in the direction of its mother ship.

Moniz tugged at his mustache, aching to see the gunboat get under way. Soon her engines were throbbing.

The moment the gray hull disappeared round the bend to the south, Moniz dropped into his small-boat and, urging the crew on with words and blows, hurried to the shore. Even as he crossed the narrow stretch of water, he laughed aloud, for a thin mist was beginning to creep up from the north.

Gossamerlike wisps of fog were drifting, spreading; Moniz knew that in half an hour they would form an impenetrable curtain. And it would not take him more than half an hour to accomplish the work he had to do.

Most of the stores he abandoned. Their value was inconsiderable. Anyway, he regarded his neck as worth much more than their cost

But there were cases of canned goods, and a cache of ammunition and money. There was water on the schooner sufficient to last a week.

Only one boat load did he dare to wait for, and the moment he drew alongside the schooner with that, he started bawling orders for the anchor to be heaved. Three minutes later, with her sails beginning to fill, she leaned over to the breeze and turned toward the embrace of the fog

As the first of the wisps of mist streamed along the side of the schooner the Portuguese chuckled. For he knew the gunboat would return to his bungalow soon, and would find the bird flown!

Truly there were elements of humor in the situation.

With a heaving deck under his feet, plenty to eat and drink on board, and a crew of cutthroats on whom he could rely to do his bidding, Moniz was not deeply concerned. He had been in worse straits than that before.

It just made one more item on his balance sheet against the forces of civilization, and, he reflected grimly, might drive him to go a little further than he ever had done.

Meanwhile his chief object was to keep out of the way of the interfering people on the war-ship. That, however, thanks to the start he had obtained in the mist, was easy; for a man who travels by sea leaves no footprints.

He kept on his northern course, beyond Tao Tao, for twenty-four hours without any very definite object in view, and then turned the schooner round. Two or three courses were open to him, but at any rate, the Sulu Sea was now an unattractive neighborhood so far as he was concerned.

There were possibilities along the coast of Borneo, but he had a fancy to strike southeast and try his luck among the countless islands off the coast of Australia. For two more days he lay discreetly under bare poles, and then headed for the Celebes Sea.

Where the gunboat might be by now he had not the remotest idea, but the ocean is wide, and he knew there was as much chance of his running into the Petrel as there was of finding a needle in a bundle of hay.

His course would take him back within a hundred miles or so of Tao Tao, and a queer smile played on his face at the

thought of it. He had on board every man in his employment, and besides there were two kinky-haired refugees from Tao Tao.

One of them had lost an eye. Both Isa and Baloo had a bitter grudge against the planter of Tao Tao, for did their backs not still bear traces of the flogging they had received under his orders?

Vasco Moniz was in the mood to attempt anything, but particularly would he like to square accounts with Trent and the big American sailor who had come between him and all his plans concerning Tao Tao.

He lay smoking many cigarettes, with one eye on the sails and the other on the man at the wheel, but his thoughts were not of seamanship. One may as well be hanged for a sheep as a goat, and a dash of profit as well as the pleasure of revenge was possible in the project he was turning over in his mind.

At last, with a wave of his arm, he summoned Isa to his side.

The diver grunted and an expression of wicked joy spread over his evil face as he listened to the white man. Was not this exactly the sort of thing he had secretly longed for? The bribe of gin and tobacco, too, that Moniz was offering gave an additionally pleasurable tang to the notion.

A little later Moniz ordered the man at the wheel to alter the course of the schooner, and Isa, going forward, entered into a chattering council of war with Baloo, whose little piglike eyes glittered in anticipation of what was to come.

The rest of the crew were then informed of the coming raid, and, with undreamed of supplies of trade gin as a reward, their enthusiasm was unquestionable.

Moniz picked up the loom of Tao Tao in the distance just as the blood-red sun dipped over the edge of the sea, and while the evening was still young he chuckled to himself, for fate was playing directly into his hands.

All day the sky had been overcast. Now the clouds were gathering. A new moon should be hovering somewhere up above, but neither it nor the stars were visible.

It was the sort of dark night he might have prayed for, had he known how to pray. With every light extinguished, and using the lead continually, he crept toward the island slowly. There was no hurry.

Not until after midnight was the anchor dropped quietly overboard, and then, after giving final instructions to Isa and Baloo, he ordered every man ashore.

First a silent, living ring was formed round the bungalow, under the guidance of the two Tao Tao men, and then Isa turned to his most delicate task.

None knew better than he that the blacks employed by the planter could be relied on to turn against him, almost to a man, if Taleile, the "boss" boy, could first be got out of the way.

Therefore he had a knife clutched in his hand as he crept toward the sleeping-hut. At the door he paused for the space of twenty seconds, listening intently. Then with infinite caution, he passed into the stifling atmosphere of the hut.

The men inside were breathing heavily, and some snored. One groaned, but it was not the groan of a man asleep. Presently he ceased to make any sound, and vague mutterings floated out into the silent night.

Above these noises was the voice of Isa. As soon as the blacks learned from him how matters stood there was no need to caution them into silence, and a few mo ments later every man—every one, that is, except he who had groaned—filed out in a sinister procession.

Moniz had taken up his position at the head of the path leading down to the beach. From where he stood there was every opportunity, in the event of the unexpected occurring, to beat a hurried retreat to the boat on the shore.

When Isa reported to him, however, that the entire black crew of Tao Tao had joined his forces he had little doubt as to the outcome of the night's work.

It was his mind that had conceived the plan of attack. It was from his brain that the suggestion came of battering down the blank wall with heavy logs.

And when the heavy crashing of beam on wood reached his ears he knew that an hour of reckoning between him and the planter of Tao Tao had arrived.

His orders had been to kill both men if necessary, but he had declared that any

one who injured the girl was to forfeit his own life, while those who took her captive were to be specially rewarded. Loot was Moniz's chief object—loot, including the pearls which he knew well enough must be hidden away somewhere in the bungalow.

If there was a good haul, so much the better. If there were not many pearls, they would at least recompense him for the trouble he was taking while passing the island

He had no particular desire to cause Trent's death, but there seemed little alternative. Keith he hoped would be killed, anyway.

"Marster Moniz!"

It was the voice of Isa near him in the darkness.

"Well, what name?" the Portuguese snapped.

"Um girl she plenty sick," the black announced.

"Sick, eh? If they have killed her! What about the two white fella?"

"Two white fella plenty ready for *kai kai*," Isa answered with a ready lie. The shots from the house had ceased, and if the white men had not already been killed Isa knew they could not face such odds long and live.

"Me kill one," he added, with a lively sense of favors to come.

"Fetch um girl along plenty quick," Moniz ordered.

The black disappeared, and a few minutes later returned with four men carrying the form of Joan Trent. The Portuguese stooped over her.

The girl's heart was still beating.

"Fainted," he muttered. "You fella come along carry um girl down to boat," he added. "Isa, you go stop all um plenty fella knocking down um bungalow, my word, or I come and be plenty angry along of them."

Moniz thought the best thing he could do was to wait until daylight, especially as he had the girl on his hands. His subtle brain had already conceived a plan for dealing with her.

When she opened her eyes Joan was on the deck of the schooner, and the Portuguese was on one knee at her side. She glanced up and saw his face in the light of a lantern. A shiver passed through her frame

"I've got you now," Moniz said in a low voice.

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE SCHOONER'S DECK.

"WHERE am I?" Joan asked with a catch in her breath as she glanced round.

"You are safe. Do not be afraid, little one," the Portuguese replied, his teeth gleaming white in the rays of the lamp

"This is my ship. It is better to be late than never. It was only just in time, though, that I arrived with my men."

Joan had regained her feet.

"What has happened?" she demanded imperiously.

"I fear you people of Tao Tao have been the victims of a rebellion," Moniz declared smoothly. "It was by the merest chance that I happened to be sailing past and heard the shouting of the blacks.

"I went ashore with my men, and for a time I feared we, too, should be overpowered, but we managed to drive them off in the end. I regret that your brother and Mr. Keith were killed before we were able to rescue them.

"It was, however, for you, *querida*, that I fought, and though I received a slight wound I count it a pleasure to have earned it in such a cause."

Joan was listening in silence. Her brother dead! And Keith! The position was unthinkable.

She remembered vividly the last few moments before she lost consciousness. Blacks had closed in on her and Chester. His revolver was empty, but he struck out, and there was the sound of heavy blows on flesh

There were two or three cartridges in her own weapon, but she was afraid to pull the trigger lest in the darkness she should injure her brother.

Then she heard Chester give a sharp cry of pain as he sank to the ground, and at the moment when she needed her strength

more than ever before, she fainted for the first time in her life.

All her old instinctive distrust for the Portuguese trader returned as she heard his story. She drew back from him as from a leper.

That her brother and Keith were both dead might be, though Moniz's story of his heroic rescue did not ring true in her ears. Indeed, she was already more than half inclined to think that the trader had been at the bottom of the whole thing.

"What do you propose doing now?" she asked in an icy tone.

"Ah, that is for you to say," replied Moniz diplomatically. "I am your servant from now on, always, if you say so.

"It may be that some time you will think less harshly of me after what I have had the pleasure of doing for you tonight—"

He drew nearer to her, but the girl held him off with an arm which trembled in spite of her determination to be brave.

"If what you say is true," she declared frigidly, "it merely helps to straighten out the balance between you and me. Remember, on one of the last occasions I saw you, you were firing at an open boat in which you knew well enough I was sitting.

"There are white men on Tamba. Please take me there."

"I think we should stay here, at any rate until it is light, dear one," he said. "There must be many things at your home which you would wish to save."

A haunting suspicion in Joan's mind suddenly began to take more definite shape.

"Such as what?" she asked.

"Your personal property," the man replied, "and—and there were, I believe, some pearls. They must be valuable, and probably you know where they were hidden."

There remained no room for doubt in her mind.

"Take me over to Tamba, immediately, please," she said. "I know nothing about the pearls you speak of."

"Ah, dear one!" said Moniz coaxingly, again drawing near to her. "You have not much gratitude for me. It was freely enough that I risked my life to serve you."

Joan's back was against the schooner's rail; she could not recede further from him. She felt his hot breath on her cheeks and his arm stole round her shoulders in spite of her attempt to ward it off

She would at that moment have given ten years of her life to be handling the revolver which had dropped to the ground when she fainted.

Every nerve in her body was strung up to breaking point. The girl could have clawed at his face with her nails.

"I am unnerved by what has happened," she said tremulously, still struggling to keep her face away from his lips which were seeking hers.

"Stop! You beast!"

There came a slight jar against the side of the vessel—so slight that Moniz, his brain aflame, did not notice it. The girl was fighting mutely.

The form of a man appeared over the side of the schooner and shot across the deck. Joan was crushed against the rail, but what she saw brought a cry of joy to her lips.

For the man whose fingers were clutched savagely round Moniz's throat was Keith!

The Portuguese muttered a surprised oath, which ended in a choking sound, and attempted to swing round on his assailant. He was held, however, as in a steel trap

The four blacks who had returned to the schooner with Moniz were standing on the deck forward of the mainmast, watching the struggle, calm though deeply interested; for the soul of your half-civilized South Sea islander is ever athirst for the sight of a regal battle.

It was of no particular concern to them which of the two should prove the victor, unless there was any chance of the victor being weak enough at the finish to fall a prey to them, and there seemed to be every indication of something of the sort happening in this case.

Finding he was unable to squirm round and face his assailant, Moniz worked one hand toward his hip pocket and managed to draw a gun from it.

Instantly Keith seized the wrist of the Portuguese.

The girl, who had cast her eyes round

hurriedly for some weapon, took hold of an iron bar and stepped near.

"Get back, Joan!" Keith shouted between his teeth, as he exerted every ounce of strength.

"Keep off, or you'll be shot."

The girl obeyed, more because she feared to inflict injury on the wrong man than lest she should be hurt.

With a sudden twist of his great frame, Moniz turned, his chest now becoming pressed close to that of Keith, and they were locked in that position momentarily, each having an arm round the other's shoulder.

"Ah, it is you!" Moniz gasped, not without a queer sense of savage joy, for there was no man he would rather fight to a finish than the American whom he had learned to hate, though there were few who came nearer to matching his strength.

There was a pause in their movements. Each man, while holding on tightly as sinew and muscle could hold, was planning his own next move in the desperate game.

Then, without warning, Keith feinted as though he were going to change his hold. Moniz moved his arm slightly and instantly Keith seized the advantage by tripping up the Portuguese. They fell heavily to the deck, Keith uppermost, but neither relaxed his fierce embrace.

Moniz still held the revolver in his right hand, and was straining to point the muzzle in the direction of the other man's body.

Keith, with the assistance of one knee, pressed Moniz's hand upward until he could reach it with his teeth. With a growl of pain the Portuguese let the weapon fall, but, summoning all his strength for one great effort, he managed to unbalance Keith, and they rolled over and over on the deck, kicking, clutching, with fingers deeply embedded in flesh.

As they rolled Moniz felt the pressure of the revolver against his side He maneuvered in such a way that the weapon came within his grasp once more.

But though his fingers closed over it, his hand was imprisoned. Keith saw no chance of making the man drop the gun, and for a while they remained rigid until the Portuguese, exerting the enormous muscles of his neck, beat Keith in the face with the upper part of his forehead.

Keith felt as though his nose must be broken. The pain was intense for the moment, and before he had time to recover from the shock Moniz succeeded in making a slight movement with the revolver, but the sailor's iron clasp reasserted itself.

The barrel was now wedged in between them. Keith was not certain whose body the bullet would enter if the revolver went off, but as far as he could tell it would be that of the Portuguese. He decided to risk everything on the hazard, and increased the pressure of his fingers over those of the man who was bent on killing him.

The weapon spat fire venomously. There was a scream of agony as Moniz relaxed his snakelike grip. With his arms waving, he struggled to his feet and tottered backward until he collided with the rail.

There was a tense hush on the deck as he leaned over the side with a jerk. Then, in the dim light of the lantern, he disappeared into the water.

Nither Joan, who stood near, with her hands clutched to her breast, nor Keith, who had half raised himself from the deck and remained there panting, spoke a word for several seconds.

The end of the conflict had come so suddenly and unexpectedly that it was difficult to realize it was over.

"Is—is he dead?" Joan asked at last, in a hushed voice.

Keith's muscles ached, and he became aware for the first time that something was trickling down his face from a gash where his head had crashed against an iron stanchion.

He rose painfully to his feet, and lurched toward the spot where Moniz had toppled over. Into the dark, swirling tide he peered, wiping a stream of blood from his eyes with the back of his hand as he did so.

Everything was still save for the ripple of the water along the side of the vessel.

"Yes, I guess he's considerably dead," Keith said, turning toward the girl, whose white face showed plainly in the half light.

"Hadn't—hadn't we better get ashore now?"

He was still dazed after his terrific exertion, but when he saw the revolver lying on the deck he stooped and picked it up.

"I don't know," the girl said. "Is it safe there? I don't know what happened.

"Moniz brought me here while I was fainting or something. He told me you and Chester had both been killed and—and it had all been so dreadful on the island that I feared it might be true. Where is Chester?"

Keith shook his head.

"I have no idea, Joan," he replied slowly. "Anything may have occured. I can hardly believe my senses which tell me that you and I are together now, but we are not out of the woods yet, by a mile.

"You know just as much about your brother as I do this present minute, but I fear they've got him. I happened to run up against Peter Pan and he told me that you had been carried off.

"I sent him to find out what had happened to Chester and help him if he could in any way, and then I came here in the whale boat. It was half afloat, otherwise I'm afraid I should never have been able to get the heavy thing off."

"Hadn't we better wait here for Moniz's men to come back to the schooner?"

"Why?" Keith asked in astonishment.

"Moniz said he took them on to the island to help us," the girl replied. "If that is so—"

"I'd like to wager my chance of ever seeing the portals of heaven that the whole thing would never have happened if Moniz had been where he is now," Keith said.

"No, his blacks will be out of hand now, and I don't like the idea of your being here when they return. We could get across to the ketch in the whale-boat, and if necessary slip the anchor; but I'm not going to do that until I know definitely what has happened to Chester.

"It will begin to get light very soon now, so we must make for the shore before they can spot us. After that we shall have to take things as we find 'em, I'm afraid. I'll put you on the Kestrel if you like, but honestly I don't recommend it."

"Let us go ashore," the girl agreed quietly.

Keith found the cumbrous boat all he could manage, for an unusually heavy tide was now running at its swiftest. The boat drifted a quarter of a mile down the shore before he managed to run the keel on the sand.

Dawn had begun to show in the eastern sky. Keith jumped over the gunwale and held out his arms to help Joan. The girl was standing up, ready to follow, but when she had placed her hands on his shoulders she let them lie there and made no move.

"This is the second time you have saved my life," she said softly and gravely. "My debt of gratitude was already so great, before to-night, that there seemed no chance of ever paying it, and now—"

"And now?" he repeated unsteadily, moved by the touch of her hands and by the pale beauty of her face in the first light of dawn.

"Now I know that I never can," she ended.

Perhaps she guessed the struggle that Keith was engaged in, caught a warning from the hunger in his eyes, for she would have withdrawn her hands had he let her. But his own closed down on them and held them where they were.

"Joan," he muttered hoarsely. "Joan!"

Her gaze wavered and fell. There was silence for a long moment while the first golden pencil of sunlight shot across the water. Then swiftly his arms went about her and she was lifted clear of the boat and held tightly while his face bent close to hers

"Joan!" he whispered again. "I oughtn't, dear! I mustn't! I—Heaven help me, I'm going to!"

He pressed his lips to hers, once—twice, and felt the kiss returned, and caught the little sigh as the form in his arms relaxed.

"My dear!" he murmured, and drew her more tightly to him until, on the instant, there came a gasp of alarm from her and, following the direction of her startled gaze, he saw a new danger confronting them.

(To Be Concluded NEXT WEEK.)

THE VOLUNTEER PLUGMAN.

BY B. J. STOLPER.

Old Jehiel Higby Tells a Thrilling Tale of the Days When Railroads Were New.

HEN the weather is fine, I potter about in the garden. I like to feel that I have not been laid on the shelf. Eh, these pressing war-times! Even a discarded old fellow like me becomes useful again—even useful to the government a little, especially if he has a gift for potatoes. And I have never lost a hill yet.

Yesterday, however, I stayed under roof. It kept drizzling from sunup till midnight, a dismal, raw sort of drip. I ambled aimlessly about the house till I found my way up-stairs to the garret.

Now, in 1861, *I* went soldiering. My old uniform was up there, with cap and belt, all carefully folded away in the studded hair trunk. I seldom take it out except for Memorial Day or for G. A. R. post.

There were many things in that old-fashioned chest. And once I had taken out and handled the blue uniform, and had put it aside, I lifted out other of the contents too, thoughtfully and at lengthening intervals: a wooden whistle with which my father used to call me from the far meadow; the daguerreotype of my dear wife; a bundle of lifeless mining-stock I once held in high hope; a yellowing newspaper with my one printed poem.

On such days, now one, now another of my relics engrosses my attention to the exclusion of the rest. Yesterday, somehow, it was a faded, leather-bound volume. On the brown-stained fly-leaf was my name, in faded green ink, written in a spidery, angular hand with queer *d*'s, and *s*'s like *f*'s. Below were the words

"From his good friend Jehiel Higby."

Book in hand, I fell musing of Jehiel, the Yankee pedler, who had brought me the gift from one of his slow journeys about the country, seventy years ago; of his shy ways; of his oval cedar snuff box; of his dingy red bandanna that set us sneezing as he dusted the grains from his frill; of his marvelous knack at wondertales that held us children open-mouthed till we were herded off to bed.

Jehiel boarded at our house, and slept on an old quilt in our big, stone kitchen. Supper would be about preparing when he came in. Immediately we children would leave everything, helter-skelter, and crowd around Jehiel.

We had no need to ask; he knew what we wanted; but we clamored just the same; it was part of the routine; a tale! an adventure! At that the old pedler would reach into a capacious skirt-pocket for the little oval box, rap the lid smartly against the smooth-grained cedar, dip in thumb and forefinger; then, one nostril -t'other—an

"Hev I ever told ye—"

Always, supper interrupted at a thrilling climax; and always Jehiel broke off, obdurate. He ate so slowly as to drive us to grumbling and black looks. But presently, between final grace and bedtime, he never failed to complete his amazing tales to our thorough satisfaction.

Every story of Jehiel's kept us on edge till the last word, often as we had heard it repeated. The old pedler used the skill of a dervish.

If my memory doesn't betray me I can do no better than to tell you Jehiel's tale of *The Volunteer Plugman*, in his own words:

Th' steamcars (he said) is a miracle o' th' Almighty. But when they 'uz fust run, abaout sixteen years ago, they 'uz looked on ez live works o' Satan.

Thet 'uz eighteen hunner thirty-three. Whut with th' red flames 'n' smuk belchin', 'n' the onearthly n'ise 'n' soot 'n' smell t' high heaven, 'n' th' turrible swiftness, folks thought 'em ag'in' Scriptur', a'most.

Grin all ye've a mind ter. When a feller wants in t' Boston now'days, he buys him a billet good ez a bond, a'most, maounts th' Bost'n 'n' Prov'dence Railway, 'n' cluck! there he be, slicker 'n' a schoolma'am.

He makes small uv it. But it tuk somewhut t' git used, at fust. Packet er clipper er canal barge on th' tow path; ox-cart er mule team er mail-coach, thet 'uz in *natur'*. Feller knew whut 'twuz moved him 'n' his bundle.

But b'ilin' water in a kettle! Whut ef th' dum contraption exploded? Er tuk it in mind t' bolt, like a pesky runaway?

'N' say whut ye will, hear me solem'ly. Iron machin'ry ain't warm, like flesh 'n' blood. It's cold ez death, er blazin' ez flame! There's onnervin' evil inter it, somewheres.

'N' when it sets stubborn, it tears off crazy blind 'n' destroyin', like a dreadful wind. Sech times—*sssss!*—a human man nigh ter it is middlin' limp 'n' humble; his bones, ez Scriptur' says, turn t' water; "accidents"—they call 'em thet happen—

Read o' one yest'rday, in th' *Argus 'n' Patriot!* Ain't a many steam-comp'nies, even t'day, hev more'n a single track. Two rails. Th' b'iler-enjine 'n' coaches is s'posed t' tarry –but du they?—on whut's called a sidin' till th' vehicle-train baound t'other d'rection gits by.

'N' four days ago, two sech b'ilers, draggin' craowded coaches behint 'em, packed tight with travelers, on a single track, frqnt t' front, come grindin' 'n' thunderin' full speed one to'ards t'other—

List'n. I, myself, 'uz once— Naow, I don't allaow t' be a hero; not a jocalmighty feller with gold braid on. I 'uz a mite, squealin' onto a comfort durin' th' Rev'lution. 'N' in 1812, when us Yankees abaout tidied up th' sea, I 'uz kinder sharp set pedlin'; hed a wife then, I did; 'n' a ma, 'n' a raft o' pindlin' brothers 'n' sisters t' rear up, I guess; er *mebbe* I might hev listed at thet. But even I

Ye see me settin' here with you little fellers, humlike 'n' safe; no danger threat'nin'; no cause t' hev my blood curdle cold, ner my hand shake with fright. But not so long, p'r'aps even a livin' hero with medals 'ud hev gut pale ez chalk ef he hed faound himself in th' shivery fix *I* jumped inter, when I, knowin' jest abaout nothin' uv b'iler-enjines, with abaout two hunner lives—fine, upstandin' young fellers' lives—dependin' on me, suddenly behelt–

But wait. P'r'aps I hed better tell ye th' breathless business frum th' beginnin':

When I 'uz sprier I uster junket abaout country by waggon, peddlin' bales o' Yankee notions. But it tuk tarnation tedium t' git araound! Taowns 'uzn't whut they air naow: clus, clus: no more apart 'n' two hollers 'n' a good stun's-throw.

Country stretched, them days; haouses 'uz scattered; 'n' ef I hedn't allaowed t' board plain, th' time alone it tuk, would hev et th' profit clean outer th' bales!

I gut ez fur 'z Ohio wunst, 'n' it tuk two months in 'n' two months back!

So when th' day come thet I'll never ferget, ez black fortun' 'ud hev it, Satan—ah, it must hev been him!—dinged it inter my skull t' tempt Prov'dence 'n' *save time.* 'N' save time I did -ah, children! though in a way thet a'most –

There 'uz a good deal o' wild talk flyin' abaout, jest then, uv a new invention, a sort o' devil-kerridge, thet hed been brung acrost frum England t' try aout here in Ameriky. There 'uz all sorts o' rumors uv haow 'twould a'most fly in the air, 'n' git up a dizzy speed, running', all th' while, onter a shinin' streak o' solid metal; 'n' more o' thet kind.

Bein' a pedler, I alwus gut t' know ez much ez most, I guess, fer us chapmen 'uz news gitters 'n' news givers, them days.

Th' trustees uv th' rich canal comp'ny hed sent a man acrost t' England, feller named Allen, t' luk it all up. Thet 'uz one thing us Yankees hedn't thunk aout fust!

'N' this Allen hed come back full o' pepper abaout th' new carry-all. Claimed

a Britisher, named Stephenson, hed run one uv them b'ilers over tracks at onheard-uv speed, 'n' ludded, too! haulin' drays, 'n' whut not!

Well, by 'n' by th' comp'ny hed three o' them b'iler-enjines brung over by brig, t' try aout here in th' *U*nited States. Mebbe th' trustees 'uz smart, but folks in aour days didn't think so

Th' comp'ny stirred up a big rumpus abaout whut all they 'uz a goin' t' do. Scattered prented handbills all over th' State, with pictur's uv th' iron mare 'n' th' new tally-ho.

Laid miles 'n' miles 'n' miles o' long, heavy timber-rails yes, thet's th' kind they hed, 't fust fer th' vehicle-train t' slide on. Fixed up th' coaches with grooved wheels, like a rain-spaout, fer th' new fangled rud.

Hitched up th' hot-water hoss, with thet feller Allen fer coachman — plugman 'uz whut they called him—'n' away she went! Made ez much ez ten mile an haour, is whut some say.

Naow, there 'uz lots o' folks thought th' trustees' wits 'uz addled. 'Rithmetic's 'rithmetic; when th' schoolmaster over to aour taown figgered aout th' sight o' wealth thet hed been sinked inter rails alone th' selectmen said they'd oughter strap some one fer a madman.

Th' fust load carried 'uz four hogsheads o' molasses. One uv th' trustees ruz up in meetin', 'n' said they'd oughter hev eighty-five coaches, t' do any half-decent business! Then we 'uz all sure they 'uz crazy.

But when they went right ahead, 'n' hired Zebulon Sprague t' gallop between th' tracks ahead o' th' b'iler on his blood mare, t' warn folks th' train 'uz comin', 'n' keep aouter th' rud then folks begun t' think. Zebulon's hire come purty high. 'N' after all, th' trustees 'uz hard-headed, slick business fellers.

'N' my, th' business went! After people quit bein' scairt o' blowin' up, 'n' uv swallerin' their breath; 'n' after they hed gut used t' lookin' like black Africans at th' clus o' th' journey, whut with th' wood smuk 'n' th' open coaches — th' railway made money.

But 'twuz *thet* brought heartache, 'n' trouble, 'n' death, too, ez I meant t' tell ye.

A wildcat's mean t' bresh on a dark night in th' woods. So's a p'ison snake. But suthin' more cruel, 'n' fierce, 'n' tiger-hearted 'en either uv 'em, is a feller who sees ye edgin' in between him 'n' his bread 'n' butter!

When steam-cars hed been runnin' abaout a year, 'n' when more 'n' more uv 'em kep' building', 'n' spreadin' over country, 'n' layin' rails, 'n' stretchin' branches— a sort o' black, turrible dangerous hate begun t' fester 'n spread right a'ong with 'em.

Inn-keepers, 'n' waggoners, 'n' stage-coach fellers is alwus in cahoots. They're baound t'gether, kinder, through their business.

Naow, them days they 'uz purty rough cust'mers; air yet, I guess; can't make a fog horn aout uv a pig's tail: th' squeal ain't in thet eend!

'N' 'twuz them fellers 'n' their riff raff - plug-uglies, surly ostlers, fly-b'-nights - thet swore bloody oaths t' eend steamcars 'n' all ridin' on steamcars!

At fust they hed haw-haw'd th' "b'iled-tea trunpike." But when they saw whut 'uz happ'nin' 'n' 'uz baound t' happen,— inns empty, stages empty, drays half-ludded, 'n' th' steamcars rattlin' by, snatchin' their livin' right aout o' their fingers—

Judah's Priest! they 'uz gnashin' mad! A gang uv th' wildest 'uns laid t'gether openly, 'n' fixed plans t' wreck 'n' tear 'n' cripple, so't folks 'ud be fright'ned pale off'n th' railway forever.

They made no secret uv it. Laid over t' Beeman's Holler with crowbars fer th' rails 'n' b'iler-enjines 'n' coaches, 'n' whips, cudgels 'n' weepons fer th' plugmen, brakemen 'n' trav'lers, too!

It come to a savage ruction quicker 'n' scat, too, right in Beeman's Holler; draggin' trav'lers off'n th' coaches, 'n' plugmen off'n the enjine; paoundin', 'n' whalin', 'n' gaougin'; 'n' then, Godfrey's mighty!— blood spilt! Some mean skunk, a grim ostler ill-famed ez a desp'rate feller, hed blowed a jaggy hole clean through a train-hand.

He hed drenched up, like th' rest uv 'em,

on rum 'n' blue ruin. 'n' then—done it' They faound th' smukkin' hoss-pist'l when th' plug-uglies bruk away 'n' rushed off.

Well! Thet ain't all, ner is it th' worst, ner is it th' worst.

In th' mean time, a c'mittee uv th' slickest uv them fellers—meanest becuz they 'uz slickest—hed hustled off ter th' State Cap'tol, hum-bent-fer-lection, t' whine 'n' holler fer their "rights"!

They 'uz publicly r'spectable, 'n' church members, some uv 'em: bus-drivers, innkeepers, 'n' draymen.

Claimed th' State hed oughter 'bolish th' railways. Claimed a taownship hed th' right t' say whut sort o' vehicles hed th' right t' run acrost th' baound'ries. Claimed they'd hed no knowledge uv th' aoutrage, gol-dum their pictur's!

But somehaow, 't hed crept aout thet 'uz braggin' uv a secret plan they hed on foot t' terrify railruddin' off'n th' face uv th' earth!

It 'uz thet moment, uv all layin' raound loose in time, thet I picked fer savin' time -trav'lin' on th' steamcars, 'n' on thet p'rtic'lar railrud!

They say a man can't ride t' heaven on a sore-backed hoss. Ef I'd hed ez much sense ez I hed fear o' th' Almighty I'd hev stayed t' hum; er done my peddlin' by wagon, slow ez I uster.

After a feller's dead time's uv less accaount t' him, th'n 'tis ter a settin' hen

I 'uz baound fer Ohio; but two months in 'n' two months back's no more'n a spit o' lightnin' t' all Eternity. But ah— I wisht I hed knowed then whut I know naow!

Th' riots hed angered the gover'ment; 'n' abaout two hunner fellers uv th' milishy, fine, good boys, 'uz hustled onto a train, 'n' rushed off daown t' Beeman's Holler. They hed muskets with 'em, 'n' paowderhorns, 'n' allaowed t' hev a time, th' good boys, settlin' things quiet.

Ye'd oughter seen 'em: singin' 'n' sillyin', stickin' their heads aout, wavin' o' han'k'chers 'n' hollerin' funny to their gals thet craowded th' leavin' place t' call goodby, oh dear! ez ef 't hed been a huskin' they 'uz baound fer—

Naow, them days I 'uz sinful fond o' profit; am yet, a leetle, I guess. 'N' th' chanst t' nip a hunk off'n expenses 'uz a dreadful temptation ter me.

'Uzn't nobuddy 'ud engage t' travel on thet train, by hoky-poky! 'n' th' hull junket 'uz a dead loss ter th' steam-comp'ny. 'Bijah Woodruff, th' steam pres'dent! he cried soppin' tears when he saw whut he stud t' lose.

I 'uz clus, but he 'uz *tight;* thet stingy, he'd skim caow's milk t' both eends! 'N' when I allaowed t' travel on thet train 'z fur ez 'twould go, 'n' *pay* fer it, he kissed me, a'most.

Let me whittle him daown ter a Yankee's bargain on th' billet.

'N' I rubbed my silly hands. B'lieved I 'uz smart, I did. Stored my bales onter th' vehicle-train—'n' slid daown hill at th' devil's speed to'ard th' edge o' destruction.

Naow, there 'uz one thing Bijah hed held aout fer. He 'uz deef t' hevin' me ride in th' coaches. Said my bales o' notions tuk up all he 'uz agoin' t' let fer thet Jew's-price.

I cal'late he 'uz givin' me a kick, kinder. Baound t' hev me wry-maouthed somehaow: hev me all jaounced up, 'n' mucked with soot. But so I come t' ride on th' b'iler, long with th' plugman

Naow, th' plugman—"enjine-wright" they called him, tew, sometimes 'uz a spindlin', timid rabbit-heart, ef I ever saw one. Name uv Mellor. He 'uz the scairtest I ever; nervous ez a flea; he 'ud turn white ez cheese ef ye laid a knuckle to him frum behint.

Haow *he* come t' be a plugman's a puzzle; but there he 'uz. 'N' a time they hed, t' git him t' guide off th' b'iler!

'T last he 'uz talked over, but nothin' 'ud suit but Bijah Woodruff must climb up somewheres prom'nent, 'n' make a speech ter th' milishy boys t' keep their ears peeled fer th' deadly danger signal. Plugman wouldn't stir a toe, withaout Bijah done thet.

So Bijah maounted up onter a box, 'n' spuk up. He hedn't wisht ter, t' fust: figgered he'd scare th' sojers, er suthin', 'n' thet mebbe gover'ment 'ud insist on packin' in more milishy, 'n' makin more expense.

But once't he 'uz up, 'twuz like bearin' test'mony in meetin' laid on, 'n' right frum th' heart! Hed a bull's v'ice, Bijah did: a big, fearsome beller. 'Uz cap'n uv a canal-barge, once't: 'n' them fellers—when they whisper in Uticky, mules jump in Canady!

"Boys!" he hollered, "fer yewr life, list'n ter me!"

With thet they all fell quiet'z a church.

"I gut t' warn ye, solem'ly. There's a new-fangled dingus been fixed onter th' b'iler, 'n' at turrible expense. It saounds a whistle by steam, joeemighty laoud.

"'N' I gut t' warn ye solem'ly, fer yewr life, boys! thet ef, by chanst, ye git t' hear two laoud, long screams on thet there whistle—pile aout 'n' *jump*, quicker'n scat! Becuz then—th' vehicle-train 'ull be tearin' to'ard suthin' onhuman, thet on'y th' Almighty kin turn!—ripped up rails—er suthin'—"

With thet he stepped slowly off'n th' box.

Shivered, I did, I'll allaow. Th' women 'uz hushed *like thet!* But th' milishy fellers hooted 'n' hollered in a minute, 'z ef 'twuz all a joke: wanted th' plugman t' give 'em a free sample, 'n' whut not.

'N' with thet, th' brass bell banged, th' smuk 'n' sparks belched, 'n' we started.

'T fust th' plugman druv creepin' slow. He 'uz all on edge; trembled, he did, kep' glarin' desp'rate t' all d'rections; hand kep' jumpin' ter th' stopper, 'n' jumpin' ter th' whistle, 'n' twitchin' 'n' floppin' like all p'ssessed, though we 'uz no goner 'en a good cat's-leap frum th' leavin' place. We jest joggled along.

But th' fireman kep' pitchin' more 'n' more cordwood inter th' b'iler; 'twuz his eend. 'N' th' steam kep' maountin' up 'n' maountin' up in th' kettle, till it looked 'z ef we'd all explode t' kingdom-come.

'N' I—I craouched daown ez small ez I could git, scairt we'd hurry, but tarnation scairter we'd tarry a mite *tew* cautious. My heart 'uz like ice in th' pit uv my stummick.

Suddenly there come a laoud yell. *Aaaaaah!* Th' plugman jumped, 'n' so did I, I swan. Th' plugman jumped; 'n' 't wuz all I could do t' ketch th' feller up.

But grace t' glory! 'twuz on'y aour own milishy on aour own train. They 'uz hollerin' ter us, 'n' all t'gether. Saounded 'z ef there 'uz on'y one big man uv 'em, with one big bull v'ice.

I stuck my head aout raound; 'n' whut did they want, d'ye s'ppose?

"Get on!" they hollered.

"H'ist a leg!"

"Whup up th' old steam mare!"

They cussed 'n' bellered 'n' threat'ned, till, whut with one thing 'n' another, th' plugman made t' turn a leetle wooden wheel—'n' off we went, lickety-split!

Th' trees tuk t' rushin' by, 'n' th' fields t' be ketched up 'n whirled away, 'n' th' wind t' roarin' past us, till we 'uz headin' on big wings, a'most, stead uv on'y wheels.

Thet plugman didn't leave me *set* easy; he 'uz onreli'ble. 'N' ef I put my life, not t' say my goods, in his keepin', I wanted t' hev at least a squeeze door aout, kinder.

So I watched him clus; 'n' tuk notice o' whut he done; 'n' hoaw he guided th' b'iler; 'n' whut he jiggled; 'n' where th' whistle 'uz, 'n' th' stopper; 'n' whut made her hurry, 'n' whut made her tarry. Thet 'uzn't ez hard ez ye might s'ppose: us Yankees is sharp nuff.

'N' them days I 'uzn't the dullest raound by a good sight. Eh, by th' time we hed gut on not much further, I 'uz mighty glad I *hed* eyed him.

Fer 'twuz duskin' gloomier to'ard night all th' while. 'N' ez we drew nearer 'n' nearer t' Beeman's Holler, th' plugman gut t' action' up more 'n' more.

He trembled so, 't his beaver hat shuk. His face 'uz th' color uv cheese, where it 'uzn't black with soot. His eyes bugged aout, 'n' he panted, panted, like a haound in hot weather.

'N' purty soon he gev a kind o' screech, 'n' throwed up his two hands, 'n' tumbled daown on th' floor. 'Twuzn't a fit, 'zactly; 'twuz fright—terror!

'N' thet b'iler, thet senseless, brute thing uv hard iron 'n' flame, thund'rin' 'n' ragin' on, two hunner-odd human lives rushin' on with it, withaout a hand ner a brain t' say where, ner haow!

I don' allaow t' be a hero. But thet didn't call fer a hero; just fer a man thet 'uzn't a plain fool! I jumped up 'z ef

I'd been slashed, 'n' laid aout t' grab th' stopper.

But Godfrey's mighty! I couldn't find it! Th' thing hed jaounced clean aouter my head.

"Th' stopper!" I hollered ter th' plugman. "Where's th' stopper? Whut d'ye grab?"

But he laid on th' floor, gibb'rin' 'n' shudd'rin', 'n' hidin' his eyes.

With thet, I made t' seize him by th' collar! t' tear th' skunk ter his feet! But th' turrible fix we 'uz in ketched me by th' throat.

'Magination run wild 'n' laid holt on me —*whut 'uz in front uv us? Whut 'uz we rushin' onter?* I jest hed t' look aout on ahead! 'N' with thet my head 'uz jerked 'z ef 't hed been slapped thet way, 'n' I behelt

Ah, Heaven o' Jedgment!

Full in th' middle uv th' tracks, right between th' rails, jaouncin' 'n' bobbin' a leetle, but not much, still a long ways off ez yit, but gittin' nearer 'n' nearer 'n' bigger 'n' bigger every dreadful minute, shinin' 'n' glarin' right in my two blinded eyes, 'uz th' great, raound headlight uv a b'iler-enjine!

We 'uz dizzyin' raound a curve, 'n' so 'uz it! Rushin' to'ard one another top-speed, 'n' front t' front, 'n' on'y one track between, fer both!

'T once't it flashed on me: them fiend-hearted black villains daown t' the cap'tol hed sprung their plan! I knowed it.

There 'uzn't a *soul* on thet b'iler ragin' to'ard us. She hed been grabbed 'n' set t' run wild. She 'uz planned t' run us daown!

I ain't much t' pray, cept Sundays 'n' We'n'sday nights. But I shet both eyes tight, 'n' prayed quick 'n' desp'rate, fumblin', fumblin' with my hand. *'N' I faound th' stopper!*

All this takes time t' tell; but it 'uzn't more'n a cluck t' happen. Aour train 'uz slowin'; but would she slow quick 'nuff? She might, but t' other—t' other wouldn't never slow.

With thet I grabbed a danglin' cord 'n' pulled th' whistle.

Aaaaaah!

Screechin' 'n' screamin', laoud 'n' long 'n' high, warnin' 'n' dang'rous 'n' terrifyin' she ruz!

Wunst!

'N' again!

'N' in a minute I could hear behint, on th' vehicle-coaches, hollerin' 'n' shaoutin' 'n' fallin' 'n' crashin' inter th' scrub 'n' bushes by th' side o' th' rud! Th' boys—leapin' 'n' jumpin' aout o' th' cars!

In thet minute, I felt -I felt like th' cap'n uv a draownin' ship. I 'uz *sartin* I'd never hev conscience t' go ter jedgment, 'z long ez I'd run away with one poor feller left on thet train

So, I helt 'er 'n' helt 'er, 'n' kep' screamin' 'n' screechin' thet whistle, till I 'uz sure, a'most, there 'uzn't nobuddy left on behint. Th' crashin' 'n' fallin' 'n' hollerin' hed stopped.

'N' 'en, at last, I grabbed th' poor skunk, th' plugman, thet 'uz layin' 'n' moanin' on th' floor, afraid t' fling aout, 'n' I throwed him aout, head, neck 'n' bones.

'N' 'en I fixed t' jump myself— But aour b'iler hed slid, trembled, 'n' stopped still.

Thunder 'n' lightnin'! I flung off, 'n' scrambled a good ways inter th' bresh, waitin', with my heart in my caowhide boots, fer th' crash uv th' explosion.

But —nothin' struck!

I swan t' man! I stud 'n' stud, 'n' stud 'n' stud, dumb ez a stockfish. By 'n' by, a craowd uv th' sojers come rushin' up, cussin' 'n' ragin' t' know whut in tarnation I hed blowed th' whistle fer?

Er *who* hed blowed it? They 'uz hoppin' mad. Harrered with bruises, they 'uz, 'n' cuts 'n' mud 'n' brambles, 'n' one feller hed his ankle bruk.

"Thank th' Almighty," I shouted, "thet 'tain't yer neck bruk!"

'N' with thet I told 'em, pantin' 'n' shakin' a turrible good deal.

Well, they waited; thet sobered 'em. But when still there 'uzn't nothin' come on t' show, some uv 'em bruk away 'n' dashed acrost th' tracks..

They run on ahead through th' medder on t' other side; 'n' purty soon more uv 'em crossed, 'n' by 'n' by—I heered 'em hollerin' 'n' *laughin'*, ez I'd never.

Then they pelted back, all uv 'em, some

scramb'in' back onter th' coaches, some makin' off t' red up bundles they hed flung aout, but all uv 'em roarin' with laughter, fit t' split.

'N' whut d'ye s'pose they allaowed 'twuz I hed seen?

Th' full moon, risin' between th' tracks!

Yeppy I 'uz thet sheepish. But I guess they 'uz right.

Hrrr-mp! Gover'ment gut th' riots in hand, 'n' th' murderer hung but thet ain't th' story!

THE SHACK.

BY FRANK BLIGHTON.

'WAY back in eighteen ninety-two
I knew a "shack" and a good one, too.
I was on a rattler, going through
To Aurora, on the C. B. and Q.
It was rather late, as I remember,
Along the front end of November.
The nights were pretty frosty, too,
As I rolled along on the good old "Q."
My car was tagged with a "Bad Order";
I crossed the Iowa-Illinois border
Without a "tumble" from the crew
And then made Galesburg, same way, too.
I must have gone to sleep 'bout then,
Because, next thing I knew was when
My side-door Pullman opened wide
And a shack with a lantern looked inside.
He says: "Hello, kid? Where you goin'?"
I says: "Aurora." And it was snowin'.
He says: "You need a new time-card—
This here's East Chicago yard."
I was chilled through to the bone.
When he said that, I give a groan.
I was in an awful pickle—
Didn't have a lousy nickel.
He pulled a six-foot three-inch smile.
Says: "Come up front. Get warm a while."
I rode the engine to Grand Crossing, too,
With this here shack and the engine crew.
And there he gave me a half a dollar,
Instead of making a grand-stand holler
For a plain-clothes dick or a harness bull—
Shook hands: "Good-by, kid, don't get full."
He grinned when he pulled that farewell crack.
I eat till a hump come on my back,
Got a smoke and nice clean collar—
All with that there shack's half-dollar.
And, if I ever hobo the heavenly track,
I'll peel my eye for that same shack.

AUSTIN IRBY—OPERATOR.—No. 2.

"Yep!" and "Nope!"

BY WILL MACMAHON.

USTIN IRBY, in age exactly midway between his fourteenth and fifteenth birthdays, was a railroad telegraph operator by all the dimensions of the craft—except in the most vital direction.

He could manipulate the sending-key remarkably well, and receive from the clicking sounder with fair ability, and his writing with pencil or pen was quite legible But and here was a condition to make the boy furious within a hard-headed old division operator would not entrust him with a real job.

It was galling to an impatient spirit to remain the five-dollar-a-week office boy in "DI," the terminal message-room of the Pittsburgh-West Division, when by right of skill and might of ambition he should be away out on the line in sole charge of a tower at sixty dollars a month.

Austin attributed his predicament to the double handicap of still wearing knickerbockers, and as yet sporting no mustache. Granny Mowrey, his foster mother, had perversely set the age of fifteen as the ripe occasion for long trousers—and this little, old Irish lady ran single track, one way only, when her mind was made up.

The most searching self-examination of the boy's short upper lip disclosed a down so faint that it discouraged him from looking in the mirror more than twice or thrice a week.

In the mean time he worked from 8 A.M. until 6 P.M., ostensibly as a sharpener of pencils and a filler of ink-wells, but in reality a fag for the message operator, who was a heavy reader of light literature during office hours. Student Irby handled nine-tenths of the day's business, and could have done the remainder if the regular man had not been compelled occasionally to lay aside his novel because of eye strain.

Austin was eager, if not frantic, to do all the office's telegraphing. His fingers itched to touch the key; to his own hearing he was making melodious dots and dashes with an admiring, although somewhat scattered, audience along the wire. When he received a message the sounder started a delicious vibration in his ears that spread throughout him to his toes; his emotion was equivalent to that of a music lover at grand opera when the star is singing.

On a certain afternoon a dozen messages were brought in at one time from the superintendent's office across the hall. They were to be sent to various points along the line, and the boy, as might a maestro with the violin, tuned up his key for the art of expression.

He had the spring adjusted to a nicety, and was about to open the circuit breaker and call the first office concerned, when his colleague spoiled the picture.

The message man had tossed aside a novel, half-read, rubbed his smarting eyelids and yawned.

"Say, Austie," he inquired, "when you read does the type ever run into solid black lines?"

"No," the student answered coldly. He hooked his toes inside the chair legs and began hurriedly to call the office for the topmost message

"Hold on there, sonny!" the regular operator called out; "I'll do some sending for a change. The script might rest my eyes!"

He strolled over and elbowed his disgusted assistant out of the chair. The

man understood perfectly what was in the boy's mind, and he added fuel to the flame.

"Fill up the ink-wells," he commanded, "and put in some fresh pen-points. You haven't done a thing around the office for a week!"

Austin, silently but with a savage mien, fetched a quart bottle of ink and a box of new pen-points to the telegraph-table. He looked into an ink-well and saw that it still was a quarter full. He picked up a pen and decided it could be used for another twenty-four hours without disrupting the service.

The boy, observing that his superior was absorbed in the sending of those messages, quietly returned the large ink-bottle and the box of pens, unimpaired, to the supplies' closet. He smiled faintly, but fleetingly—as befitted a rebellious slave to duty.

Austin then seated himself at a "dead" telegraph-key in a remote corner of the room and began to practise sending on this currentless thing, a clavichord that none but he could hear—"making up messages out of my head," as he described the stunt. The first telegram that he pretended to send read:

DIVISION OPERATOR
Place Mr A. Irby, telegrapher, at once in a tower position; salary, sixty dollars a month
Answer. SUPERINTENDENT.

And the imaginary reply instantly followed thus:

SUPERINTENDENT
O K DIVISION OPERATOR.

The boy sighed with the hopelessness of such promptitude in actuality and commenced to talk to himself on the key.

"Dog-gone the luck!" he soliloquized at his top speed. "Darn it! Here I've been working six months for a measly five dollars a week—and that only allows Agnes a new hair ribbon about once a month. I want to get Granny a better bonnet and shawl. The division operator is robbing my family of its clothes; that's what he's doing! The message man, and Vic Ryan, the copier, are helping him to steal! They say I lack 'experience.' Bah! Just wait till I get a job out on the line. I'll send like a house afire every time I have a message, darned if I don't! Dog-gone it!"

Agnes was his make-believe sister, ten and a half years old, and the orphaned grand-daughter of Austin's foster mother. Granny Mowrey's pension from the government was twenty-five dollars a month, and with the boys' wages just sufficed to support the three of them.

It was a family understanding that the little, old lady was to make envious their tenement neighbors by flaunting a new toque and cape when the lad became a real telegraph operator.

Vic Ryan, the train despatcher's copier, came in hurriedly from the division operator's office down the hall. He was the newly promoted second trick man, with hours from 4 P.M. to midnight, and now was going on duty—and only a half minute before this had finally succeeded in browbeating the old man into promising that the first telegraph vacancy would be filled by Austin Irby.

The copier did not disclose his private information to the wire head that a certain operator would quit the job the very next day. This was to be ammunition for "Austie" to fire and make a bull's-eye on a sixty dollar tower.

Mr. Ryan, a handsome, curly haired young man, smiled genially behind the boy's back. He had been his volunteer teacher of the Morse alphabet, with the boast that inside of six months "Mr." Irby should be a telegrapher. That period having elapsed, the instructor lately had been forced to quote "lack of experience," a phrase that made his ambitious pupil rage inwardly.

But all was well now. There sat the unwitting appointee with a real position only one day removed.

Austin perched erect in the chair, just as was Ryan's custom, with his feet hooked inside the chair legs in the same imitation. He aped Ryan's suspicious glance at the clock overhead—as if challenging the rather well-established fact that time flies.

He also had hold of the key in Ryan's fashion, which was the Catlin grip used by fast senders.

The copier knew, moreover, that the boy's handwriting was a determined copying of his own style, with the small "w" promoted to be a capital, and the large "E" demoted to the lesser form.

And now, as Austin absorbedly employed his left hand to twist his upper lip as if he, too, had a Ryanesque mustache, the young man's heart warmed toward this orphan boy whose father had been an engineer on the road and died at his post of duty. The son also was to become a loyal employee of the Pittsburgh-West Division; a proud volunteer in the army of railway America.

"The poor kid!" Vic Ryan mused. "He will be delighted when I tell him, but ten years from now he won't like the business so well. Telegraphy isn't a stepping-stone—it's a rut.

"Here I've been a copier eighteen whole months, and I ought to have a train despatching job right now! If I only had a college education I could be a lawyer, a doctor, a mining engineer, anything I wished.

"But I certainly will move the traffic when the old man gives me my chance! We're getting faster engines right along, and our road-bed is the best in the world. Once the rush and roar of the trains and the sight of the signal lights and the semaphores get under Austie's skin, he will be a goner, too. The poor kid!"

He strode forward and tapped Austin on the left shoulder, then quickly stepped to the right. It was an ancient trick in the office, but the student fell for it once again, being occupied in his inaudible practising.

The boy turned to the left and then had to whirl back to the right to face his disturber.

"Well?" he growled.

"Sending for practise, Austie?" Vic inquired, as a friendly overture after his practical joke.

"Nope! I'm flying a kite! Can't you see the long tail on it? Want to send up a paper messenger on the string?" the boy rejoined sarcastically.

The copier was not offended; he had left himself open to reprisal by asking a foolish question. He rather admired the lad's smartness, the more so because it was an imitation of his own.

"Speaking of messengers, Austie," Mr. Ryan remarked, "I suppose you're too busy to run a little errand for me into the division operator's office! Yes?"

"Yep!" was the prompt response. "I've a lot of ink-wells to fill and a slew of pen-points to change!"

And Mr. A. Irby, determined to become a telegrapher at the earliest possible moment, pointedly returned to his solitary sending.

The copier stepped back. He frowned slightly and whistled as if in deep thought.

This pert, if not impertinent lad was the same who entered that office only a half year before as obliging as a poor relative in a rich man's home, and saying "Yes, sir!" and "No, sir!" and "Thank you!"

"It's 'Yep!' and 'Nope!' now," Mr. Ryan observed mentally. "I guess the good news about the job will keep a while.

"Let me see if I can dope out some plan in the mean time to bring him back to civilization. The kid is liable to get a swelled head if he isn't taken down a peg or two."

The message operator by now had finished sending the dozen telegrams, and was engrossed again in the empty-headed novel. The copier jerked the book from his hand—for the benefit of Austin, who looked on out of the tail of his eye—and fled into the despatchers' room. The indignant reader pursued Ryan beyond the boy's uncaring purview.

But Mr. A. Irby would have been consumed with curiosity if he could have seen what occurred in that adjoining room. Mr. Ryan motioned to the message man to cease warfare, and then brought into a low-voiced conference his own despatcher and the two men of the first train trick.

The subject was Austie's new and growing insolence and how best properly to humble him.

After a while the message man, clutching the rescued novel, entered his office. He was muttering as if in anger.

Soon the first-trick despatcher and his copier came out, homeward bound after their eight hours' work. They appeared worried.

"Anything said to department of finance about the silk train?" the despatcher inquired with an air of caution, but loud enough for Austin to hear.

"Not a word," the message man answered testily. He read on with determination.

"She goes over our division to-night," the copier volunteered; first time we've had silk in a year. Carries armed guards. Wonder what her consignment is worth?"

The novel peruser snorted with well-assumed annoyance.

"How can I tell?" he demanded; "the message will be in code."

At that moment Vic Ryan looped in a short wire from his switchboard to the instrument on which the student was practising, and a few seconds later a message was brought in by a clerk from the superintendent's office.

The men assembled in a group and read it eagerly.

"Eight words!" the copier exclaimed. "She's worth away up in the millions!"

"No wonder," the despatcher remarked; "twenty box cars loaded with pure silk!"

The pair left the office, carefully herding ahead of them the clerk, who was having difficulty in keeping an unsmiling countenance.

The message man jealously kept the telegram from Austin's view, reached over him to the now "live" wire, and began to call thus: "DF DF DF."

"Oh, I'm on!" the boy said confidently; "department of finance! Let me call him."

"You hear too much, sonny, for your own good," his superior observed mysteriously. "All right, go ahead, but let me know the instant he answers. I'll send the message; it's code, and you lack experience in this branch of the business!"

Austin began to call "DF" with great fervor, and the regular operator went back to his book. He left on the desk the fateful telegram, face down, but the boy did not turn it over.

Flip he was, and unmannerly with the men of the office who had encouraged his familiarities, but he was not a sneak. Granny Mowrey, his sponsor, was heart and soul and vocally for Irish Home Rule, and he knew what she thought of peeking. He would not play "an English thrick!"

And from the silk train to his foster mother stretched an association of ideas. Here in this message was mentioned a consignment worth millions of dollars—and he could not afford to buy her one small cape of the material.

Taking the clothes right off Granny Mowrey's back, the division operator was, dog-gone the luck and darn it, too. He now made his calling of "DF" sharp and spirited.

At the end of fifteen minutes Copier Ryan came to the doorway and announced:

"She's this side of West End Junction, and making passenger time. I tell you, these new camel-back, hog-bellied freight engines travel when they get the right of way!"

The message man merely grunted. That was acting faithfully the rôle he would have played if there actually had been a silk-laden train rushing eastward.

To him nothing was novel but a novel.

Austin, however, immediately put more vigor into his "DF DF DF." He now was racing against time, with a roaring, rocking freight-engine as an added starter. There were armed men aboard that train, too, ready to do or die if desperadoes appeared.

But at the end of another quarter hour's reiteration of those two letters—dash two dots and dot dash dot—the edge was worn from his speed. He began to vary the process, now making a wide space between two quick letters and then running together slow pairs of them—as if they were animals going into the ark, two by two—deer, jack-rabbits, and kangaroos, and then elephants, rhinoceri, and hippopotami.

At five o'clock the message man jumped up in dismay.

"What! Not answered yet?" he demanded, with an accusing glance at the clock.

"Nope!" the boy replied.

"Well, keep after him. He's likely to be in any minute between now and six!"

"Yep!"

The operator walked over to the desk,

eagerly picked up the message and read it aloud.

"'*Epon pey,*'" he declaimed musingly; "'*talxw na yirennamnu buc pilf tarb.*' Some code, Austie!"

He carelessly placed the telegram, face up, at the student's elbow, and returned to the eye-strain of cheap printing. The practical joke was about to mature, and if the student didn't discover it unaided, Vic Ryan would cut in at the switchboard and enlighten him.

But there had come a rush of train work, and the copier was held at his desk. An extra section of the Westbound Limited was demanding a clear track, but a freight-train ahead of it on Long Tom Hill had a different idea.

The mogul engine had tackled the stiff grade in the manner of an old-time, one-cylinder automobile—"I think I can! I thought I could! I thought I—"

Meanwhile the despatcher played his best chess and checkers with the train-sheet and the schedule, and the copier was an extremely busy copy-cat.

Austin called "DF" with renewed interest as he read and reread the message at his elbow. The words appeared meaningless to his eye, but the message man had made them sound like Granny Mowrey's Gaelic when the Irish-American language failed her in describing the iniquities of the English government.

After a while he paused long enough to call out coaxingly: "If he answers before six, may I send the code message?"

"Yes, sir!" the regular man replied, with pointed politeness.

"Does 'DF' ever fail to answer altogether?"

"No, sir!"

The boy kept after "department of finance" every onerous minute right up to six o'clock. He called swiftly and lightly, slowly and heavily, hopefully, impatiently, angrily, and despairingly.

His forearm began to ache fiercely, and then turned so numb that he barely could make the characters.

And then an answer came.

"What's all this?" a swift sender demanded.

Vic Ryan at last had found a few spare minutes, but he was not satisfied to stick to the original plan. He would gild the lily.

"Sign!" Austin said wearily.

"This is 'DF'!"

"Well, I've been calling you blame near all afternoon! Here's a code message. Ready?"

"I can't read that rotten Morse!" the astounding announcement flashed out. "Get the operator! Keep off the wire, you ham!"

Mr. A. Irby paused just long enough to say "G. T. H.," an unpolite injunction at the best, seized his cap and dashed from the office. It was one minute past six and his day's work officially o'er.

"Rotten Morse?" he breathed bitterly as he went down the stairs two at a time. "Ham?" he muttered murderously as he banged the street door; "I'll go to 'department of finance' office some fine day and bounce an ink-well off his fool head. I called him two solid hours, and then he tried to get fresh with me!"

Mr. Ryan came out to complete the practical joke by word of mouth. He found only a message man intent on the last, or lived-happily-ever-after chapter of a book.

They decided to continue the game with Austie on the morrow; to make it epic. He should call "DF" from 8 A.M. until the copier again came on duty at 4 P.M.

"Once I called 'AF' all morning," the message operator said reminiscently; "and then was told that I was 'a fool!' It did me good."

"The truth should hurt no one!" Ryan agreed, too readily.

The other telegraph expert snorted his annoyance.

"Then you'd better put in the rest of your night," he said meaningly, "making 'FH' on Austie's private wire."

He jammed on his hat, shoved the novel into a coat-packet, and strode to the door. Vic began to whistle loudly.

"'FH,'" the message man shouted, "stands for fat head!"

"Good night, old top!" the copier retorted cheerfully; "be careful not to catch

fire when the wife stands you on your dome to grease the frying-pan!"

Mr. Ryan's repartee always had been a pattern and a joy to Austin, and on the way home this evening, and throughout his supper, he mentally rehearsed Ryanesque phrases that should excoriate that flip operator at "DF" office. But this was Irish stew night at Granny Mowrey's table, and his rancor evaporated after a third helping with the huge granite-ware spoon.

"Is there anything on yer mind, lad?" the little, old lady inquired.

"No, ma'am," he answered politely.

He could not be short-tempered or impertinent to Granny Mowrey. A nope or a yep would have brought from her either tears or a swift slap alongside the ear, her moods being sensitive or savage, and never half-way between.

"Will ye aid Agnes a bit wid her home work from th' school? Sure, th' teacher does nothin' at all, at all, in th' day toime, judgin' from th' number av books th' child lugs wid her at noight! Will ye?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The little girl was a year advanced beyond the average pupils, and it was the family intention to provide her with all the schooling that makes a "rale leddy," even to a college degree. Austin had been graduated from public school only a half year before, but Agnes saw more in her books than he ever found there, and these nightly studies were a challenge to the masculine wit to arise and defend itself against the feminine mind.

This time the boy had increased difficulty in posing as a conqueror of grammar, what with the fresh and rankling memory of "DF's" insults, and he welcomed the moment when Agnes Helene Mowrey began to set aside her leaning tower of books. Then he talked "shop," a pastime that never failed to win the keen interest of his make-believe sister.

"We had a roast this afternoon," he remarked; "but the op wouldn't let me handle it. You'd think I was a ham!"

"What's a 'roast,' Austin?" the little girl asked. She knew "op" was operator, and "ham" an incompetent specimen of the same.

"Oh, a whole lot of messages coming in a bunch," the boy answered, and he added loftily: "We had some code, too."

"Code?"

"Yes; words that do not mean what they say."

"Oh, I see; something like a fib!" Agnes surmised eagerly.

"No, no!" he replied disappointedly.

Perhaps the family was making a mistake in planning high school and college for this girl child who could not grasp the meaning of a simple word of four letters! But she was so abashed by his tone that he relented in that tentative masculine judgment.

"It's this way," he explained, taking pencil and paper and writing two "code" words: "There—'*Epon pey*'—they stand for money away up in the millions!"

Agnes took the page, gazed in awe at the writing, and then exclaimed:

"Aren't they funny, Austin? Spelled backward they mean 'Nope' and 'Yep'!"

The boy fairly snatched the code from her grasp and stared at it.

"Uhuh!" he agreed thoughtfully; "that is queer!"

Mayhap higher education for young women might not prove an utter failure in the case of Agnes Helene!

The next word in the well-remembered message formed in his mind. It was "*tahw*"—"what," of course, spelled in reverse order.

With haste, but guarding his script from the little girl's view, he added the rest of that deceptive code to make complete its:

"*Epon pey tahw na ylrennamnu buc pilf tarb.*"

"Nope! Yep! What an unmannerly cub! Flip brat!" he now could read.

Austin's face turned scarlet and he crumpled the page in his fist.

"Oh, let me see what you've written! Please!" Agnes coaxed.

"C-c-can't!" he stammered

"Why?"

"It's a—a secret m-m-message about a—a s-silk train!" he managed to say.

"On a dress?" the girl inquired politely, but he did not reply with the scorn she deserved.

"No, Agnes," he explained dully. "Twenty box cars filled with pure silk."

"Oh, my!"

The boy, suddenly feeling faint and cold, arose and stumbled toward the stairs leading to his room in the attic. He wished to be severely alone and entirely free from sympathy in the world that now was crumbling all around him.

"Ye look white about th' gills, lad!" Granny Mowrey remarked critically. "Are ye ill, Oi dunno?"

"No, Granny! I—I feel fine!" he groaned and fled.

"That third helpin' av th' stew!" the little, old lady observed significantly to her small grand-daughter.

"He always eats that much of it," the girl said calmly; "I had two helpings; you took one. I enjoyed it."

"So did Oi," Granny Mowrey declared; "but th' min have dilicate stomachs! Sure, Oi once knew a mon back in Athlone that frequintly became loight-headed on too much butthermilk an' potaties! But th' absentee landlord, bad cess to th' English blaggard, heard av it an' tuk away th' cow—an' give him a pig, instead! 'Twas a crooel thrick, indade, indade!"

Agnes laughed delightedly, and the sound of her merriment reached the victim of another cruel trick in his lofty retreat. He hurriedly made certain that the crumpled "code" page still was in his possession, tore it into tiny pieces, and tossed them from the window to the night breeze.

Then Austin Irby sat on the one chair in his sparsely furnished room and gave himself up to despondency. He knew now, beyond any doubt, just what kind of a fool was meant by the abbreviation "DF"!

"I never can enter that office again!" he thought. "What will I do to make a living elsewhere?"

Besides his late-lamented telegraphy, two other careers had appealed to him in former years. As a ten-year-old, he learned to swim in the Allegheny River, at first paddling close inshore on a floating railroad-tie, but eventually joining the hardy spirits who splashed, hand over hand, into midstream to catch the waves of the stern-wheel steamboats.

Even now he could recall the thrill of the "drag," that mysterious, towering, curling wave that followed about a city block behind the craft.

One of the large youths that frequented those waters in the summer diving from the same coal barge as Austin, but handicapped with a bathing-suit—had become a local champion in winter tank events. The smaller boys imitated his Australian crawl stroke in everything but speed; when a steamboat hove in sight like a swan, or at least a Canada goose, they lapsed into their overhand churning of the oily surface.

"I'm bigger now," the ex-telegrapher mused; "I could win a cigar-boxful of medals for swimming and sell 'em—and get Granny what she needs to wear."

Then there had been his twelve-year triumph when he exchanged wild swings with a strange Italian lad of a similar age who tried to discourage the American from selling afternoon newspapers at the Sixth Street bridge, a choice stand. The other boy, after repeated attempts, succeeded in stopping a chance blow with his nose.

When he ran away, shrieking as if it were his Latin heart's blood that was being shed, a bystander broad-shouldered, bullet-headed, and long-armed—spoke not unadmiringly to Austin.

"You swing like a gate!" he said. "Jab, kid, jab! Use the left. Get me?

"I'm a knuckle-pusher myself, and I never try a haymaker with the right until the other guy is groggy. See!"

This was a young man, and he wore a large diamond ring.

"I know now what 'jab' and 'haymaker' mean," the retired office-boy told himself; "and I'd pawn my diamond ring and get Granny the hat and shawl."

Then he dwelt on the fetching picture his unexpected presence would make in "DI" office some fine day when he swaggered in with a four-carat gem sparkling in the foreground. Copier Vic Ryan and the message man and all the despatchers, and even the old division operator himself, would be mighty polite to "Kid" Irby, the noted knuckle-pusher.

If a practical joke were required, he would supply it—say, a left-hand jab to

their respective noses. For any one that objected to this pleasantry there would be the penalty of that right-hand swing known as the haymaker.

Just for good measure the boy added a bunch of gold medals to the chest of his winsome athletic subject. He might as well be a champion swimmer, too.

But even extremely imaginative lads of fourteen and a half years must concede, after an unescapable weighing of the cold facts, that the commercial possibilities of amateur tank events and professional prize rings are weary years in the future for them.

Meanwhile for Austin Irby there was the household's pressing need of his earning that slavish five dollars a week by filling ink-wells and replacing worn pen-points.

"O. K! I'll go back to work in the morning," he decided heroically, "and take my medicine like a man."

After he climbed into bed a mildly comforting thought came to him.

"Well, anyhow," he whispered, "it took a half dozen grown men to play that joke on me! It's easy to fool a boy that has so many troubles on his mind. Gee, that shawl of Granny's is a thousand years old, and her bonnet was made in the year one, I bet!"

When Granny Mowrey tiptoed into the attic room she found her foster son deep in slumber and his brow was untroubled. But the boy's clothes were carefully arranged for quick donning on the near-by chair—like a fire horse's harness—and the little, old lady muttered wisely to herself when she noted this phenomenon.

"There be's somethin' on th' lad's mind," she said later to Agnes Helene, "he niver mintioned long pants once this avenin'. On his fifteenth birthday he shall have thim, an' not a livin' minute afore.

"Sure, Oi've seen grown min in Oireland a wearin' of knee-breeches, an' foine appearin' they were, too. Av coorse, 'tis all in havin' a well-turned calf.

"Oi w'u'd loike ye to imagine a bogligged, knock-kneed, pigeon-toed Englishman a prancin' around in knee pants! Glory be, but what an awful soight for th' public!"

"Austin ought to be glad he isn't a Scotch lad with short skirts and bare knees!" the little girl remarked.

"Oi niver thought av th' kilts!" Granny Mowrey rejoined. "Do ye say nothin' at all, at all, an' Oi'll hand him that argymint in th' marnin'!"

But when she said her top of the morning to the boy, he had on his mind weightier affairs than the lack of long trousers. Arising early, he made himself fairly shine with soap, hair brush, and shoe blacking—and then managed to maintain an innocent demeanor throughout the breakfast half-hour while meditating an act of villainy.

Austin had reason to believe that it was policy for him to bribe the message man into a minimum of remarks concerning false "DF" office and the fantom code telegram.

The student had no gold, but the operator was a book lover. Now, Granny Mowrey had a wonderful volume—of which she took jealous care. It was necessary, therefore, to borrow this reading material entirely without her knowledge.

Granny Mowrey's book was a large scrap album nearly filled with newspaper clippings, each one highly derogatory to the English as individuals or a nation. There were accounts of heavy failures in international marriages between New York heiresses and London dukes, but these merely were pasted in for color.

The human interest of the collection, the little, old lady believed, was in the unillustrated items describing high-handed actions of absentee English landlords, through their agents in Ireland, up to and including the last eviction for non-payment of rent.

She had scribbled on the fly-leaf a title that was quite dignified, considering the state of her mind. It read.

"Containing only a few of the English crimes against old Ireland, home rule and civilization."

Her name was inscribed defiantly underneath, thus:

"Mary Cecilia Mowrey, from the Emerald Isle."

Austin, with the sleight of hand natural to boys, carried off the scrap album from before his foster mother's very eyes.

His method was simplicity itself. He fidgeted with his feet, digging the toe of one shoe into the carpet—a habit that Granny Mowrey detested. Her attention being focused on the floor, he reached behind him to the sitting-room table and seized the book.

Thereafter, he merely had to face her with one hand at his back and walk away holding to his chest the clippings she was unwittingly loaning to an outsider.

He reached " DI " a quarter-hour ahead of time instead of his customary five to ten minutes late. When the message man arrived at 8 A.M. he found his office-boy at a startling employment.

Austin Irby, nine-tenths telegrapher, was dusting the rungs of a chair. The man watched fascinatedly as this volunteer porter completed that piece of furniture and then tilted another for the dust rag's attention

" Are you sick, Austie?" the operator demanded solicitously.

" No, sir!"

" What! Did I hear you say ' sir '?"

" Yes, sir'"

The message man strode to the telegraph table and glanced along it. All the inkwells had been filled to overflowing, there were new points in the pens, and the telegraph-blanks were placed just so

" Let me know what you think of this book," the boy remarked, briskly fetching the album forth from a drawer. He meant his tone to be offhand, but the man heard in it anxiety with a capital A.

The regular operator silently sat down and skimmed through the pages, merely pausing occasionally to read a glaring headline. This was not his idea of literature, but it occupied the hands while he did some heavy thinking.

His attitude was that of a connoisseur of jewels to whom a child might submit a treasured piece of colored glass for a verdict. There was irresistible flattery in this situation for the expert on light novels.

" It's a great book, Austie!" he declared judicially. That seemed, however, a too brief endorsement, and he added ponderously:

" I do not believe I've ever seen anything on the same subject to equal it for compre-hen-sive-ness."

He drew out that last word like a candy-maker pulling taffy hand over hand.

" Oh, by the way," he concluded, as if with an afterthought;; " you leave Vic Ryan to me. He's too fresh! I'm going to talk turkey to him."

The boy nodded happily. His devastated world now was fifty per cent restored at least.

Copier Ryan came in quietly well ahead of 4 P.M. He confidently expected to find Austin still calling " DF," with an arm more than half paralyzed, but the student was in a corner intent on Granny Mowrey's album to learn why the message man called it a " great book."

He could not determine whether it was because beautiful heiresses with weak minds marry impecunious dukes with appetites for strong liquors or owing to the fact that Irishmen are so brave it is necessary for the landlords to collect rent with the aid of the constabulary.

The message man put a warning finger to his lips and then led Mr. Ryan out and down the hall beyond Austin's hearing. Their conclusions were these·

" Vic, that kid is all right! You put up a mean trick on him and hurt his feelings. I'm sorry."

" I did? Why, you hypocritical fathead, you suggested ' DF ' for the call, yourself! But, I'm sorry, too."

On one point, however, the copier remained firm. The boy still had an errand to run.

Ryan again entered the message-room, but this time he was loudly whistling his favorite tune. Austin quickly arose and approached him.

" Good afternoon, Mr. Ryan," he said.

" Ah, Mr. Irby, as I live!" Vic mimicked the pose. " Lovely fall day!"

" Yes, sir."

" Are you too busy now to oblige me with a few minutes of your valuable time?"

" No, sir!"

" Then run into the division operator's office and tell him you just heard there is a vacancy at ' FO,' and he promised me you should have it!"

"FO" was the call for the freight office, a mile away in the terminal yards, and one of the few jobs on the road where the operator had nothing to do with the actual running of trains. It was an ideal berth for a child telegrapher.

The boy darted from the room without even a thank you, but the two men understood and sympathized with his great excitement. He was back inside of five minutes, flushed and happy, and shook hands with all, including the first-trick train despatcher, as their new equal in the science invented by Professor Samuel Finley Breese Morse.

"I go to work to-morrow A.M.," Operator Irby informed them; "the freight office pays only fifty dollars a month, but I can live at home—and that's better than sixty out on the road, the old man said!

"I'll have to pick out a good personal sign for myself now."

Railroad telegraphers identify themselves on the wire with self-chosen signals, usually one or two of their initials or a couple of haphazard letters that tickle the individual fancy. Vic Ryan's sign, for instance, was "V," and it sped out explosively from his finger-tips when he was in a hurry.

Austin, until now, had made use of the message man's initials in doing the office work.

The boy's veiled request to his hearers to make suggestions for a fitting personal identification for him was followed by a significant pause. The answer was obvious, but cruel, and the four men severally hesitated to make it.

But the second-trick despatcher, having entered the room just as Austin made his valedictory—and knowing naught of the porter work and the "great book," and the "yes, sirs," and "no, sirs"—had no scruples.

"Why not adopt 'DF' for your sign, Austie?" he inquired with a helpful air.

Then all the men laughed and closely watched the victim's face. They saw there not a trace of chagrin.

Mr. A. Irby smiled indulgently, reminiscently. There now was no sting in that fake code message and the false, insulting office call

It all occurred in his salad days. He was only a student then.

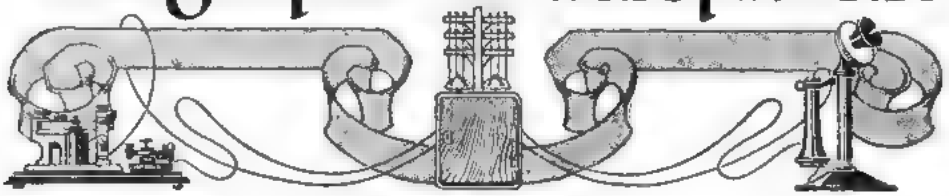
YOUTH IN WAR.

OUR Civil War has often been called the "War of Youth," on account of the age of the soldiers upon enlistment. In this connection an interesting table is given in "The American Army," Major General William H. Carter's recent book. Of a total of 2,778,304 men enlisted in the Union army during the war less than one-fourth were more than twenty-one years old. The table of ages at enlistment follows:

Those 10 years and younger	25
" 11 " " under	38
" 12 " " "	225
" 13 " " "	300
" 14 " " "	1,523
" 15 " " "	104,087
" 16 " " "	231,051
" 17 " " "	844,891
" 18 " " "	1,151,438
Between 18 and 22 years	2,150,798
" 22 and 26 years	618,511
" 26 and 45 years	46,462
More than 45 years old	10,071

The statistics relating to very young boys, General Carter says, have often been questioned, but, he adds, it must be remembered that the enlistment of mere children as drummers and fifers formerly was authorized in our army. General Carter himself was only twelve and a half years old when he enlisted as a mounted despatch messenger in 1864.

Telegraphic & Telephonic



IF there is anything you want to know about the telegraph, telephone, or radio telegraphy—if you have an operating problem that puzzles you—if you want to discuss a question of theory—write the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE. We have engaged a technical expert who is one of the leading authorities of the country on these subjects. Ask him. He knows!

C. AND A., AND C., B. AND Q.

MISS FLORENCE E, Scranton, Pennsylvania.—The superintendent of telegraph of the Chicago and Alton Railroad is Mr. G. W. Hulsizer, with offices at Bloomington, Illinois. The superintendent of telegraph of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad is Mr. V. T. Kissinger, with offices at Chicago, Illinois.

ARLINGTON RADIO.

G. K L., Los Angeles, California.—It is true that the operation of amateur radio stations has been prohibited for the period of the war, but the navy and the army are operating a great many land stations

Each night the Navy Department sends out from Washington a wireless news service, "The Navy Press," to all ships and coast radio stations. The messages transmitted range from 800 to 1,600 words in length, and are made up of interest to officers and seamen in all branches of the naval service. On board ship the bulletins are posted conspicuously, so that all may have access to them Transmission is in plain language, no code or cipher being used.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

EDWARD H. L, Dallas, Texas.—Do not be backward in writing this department at any time on any subject connected with telegraphy, telephony, or radio. All inquiries the answers to which are not published are answered by mail. Many questions sent in are of a nature that require immediate replies, and some are of a nature that make it advisable not to print the replies in the magazine

The editor of this department would be glad to cover thoroughly any phase of technical instruction that would be of general interest.

One telegraph technical club holding meetings in an Eastern city regularly sends in requests for information and for decisions upon debated technical questions.

The replies published are, as a rule, so worded that the information supplied is of value to telegraph readers everywhere, and at the same time the correspondent receives a satisfactory reply to his inquiry

OPERATORS WITH THE COLORS.

CONTINUING our lists of "Operators with the Colors," the following have been reported. From the C., R. I. and P Railway, Harry Vetter, H. E. Sloan, and S Mathis.

PRINTING TELEGRAPH SPEEDS.

T. J. K., Battle Creek, Michigan.—The Morkrum duplex printer operated by expert typists has handled as high as 1,000 messages per day each way over one wire, on a circuit between New York and Boston with no repeaters. By a day is meant from 8 A.M until 5.45 P.M.

CARDWELL PRINTING TELEGRAPH.

H. O F., Birmingham, Alabama.—The printing telegraph system manufactured by Dr. Cardwell is that known as the product of the American Electro Distributor Company, 131 Liberty Street, New York

Dr. Cardwell's son, Allan Cardwell, is the inventor of the printing telegraph system manufactured by the American Typewriter Telegraph Company, 251 West 19th Street, New York

FAST SENDING.

J. J. S., Calvin, Oklahoma.—If you are not now a rapid sender with the ordinary Morse key, then with a semiautomatic sending machine you could perhaps learn to send fast more quickly

than by attempting to speed up your hand sending

Practise makes perfect, and many telegraphers have become fast senders only when they found themselves in positions where they had a large amount of sending to do. Unless an operator has a considerable amount of sending to do he lacks the opportunity to become a fast sender.

To become a good Vibro sender requires long practise, but experience shows that a greater number of men have become fast senders with the Vibro than have acquired high speed with the hand key. This is notwithstanding the fact that all of the fast-sending tournament winners have been hand senders

The Candler system, as we understand its benefits, is particularly helpful to telegraphers who have been good hand senders and who have lost their grip

FRENCH TELEGRAPH TERMS.

W. L. D., Trenton, New Jersey.—Herewith is given the French of the more common telegraph terms:

ENGLISH.	FRENCH.
Relay	Relais
Sounder	Sounder
Key	Cle
Leg-board	Tableau de renvoi
Pole-changer	Changeur de pole
Polar relay	Relais polarisé
Fuse	Fusible
Switch	Commutateur
Line	Ligne
Lightning arrester	Paratonnerre
Magnets	Aimanta
Open circuit	Ouvert circuit
Ground wire	Plaque de terre
Pole	Poteau
Condenser	Condensateur
Battery	Pile
Electric bell	Sonnerie
Insulation	Insolement
Repeater	Relais translateur
Transmitter	Transmetteur
Current	Courant
Coils	Bobines
Closed circuit	Fermé circuit
Spark-killer	Étoufter d'étincelles
Bug-trap	Retardateur

TELEGRAPH STUDENT.

MINNIE R., Ucon, Idaho. You write a very pretty pen-copy. That is one of the requirements of a good telegraph operator

With a telegraph sounder and key you could learn the alphabet at home, but unless you had the guidance of an experienced telegrapher to whom you could send, and who could send to you, you would not make rapid progress

You might write to Mr M H Brown, superintendent of telegraph, O. S. L. Railway, Salt Lake City, Utah, asking if arrangements can be made for you to practise telegraphy in a depot on that line.

"S" FOR FIGURE 6.

G. M T., St. Louis, Missouri.—In the transmission of messages which contain only groups of numbers as code combinations, or groups of figures representing car numbers, operators sometimes use the letter S (three dots) in place of the regulation symbol for the figure 6 (six dots). The object is to save time and increase the speed of message transmission. The idea has not been officially approved by the telegraph companies, but a team of operators working either end of an important circuit, who have confidence in each other, can undoubtedly handle a greater volume of business in a given time by using three dots for the figure 6 where in the course of a day they handle many messages composed of figure groups.

Operators using Continental Code employ a similar short-cut in figure-group transmission. They call a, one; u, two; v, three, *et cetera*, omitting the dots and dashes appearing before or after the significant elements of the figure symbols.

OPERATORS' FIST.

MR. L. O. PETERSON, Box 642, Bloomer, Wisconsin, is a telegraph penmanship fan. He has started a scrap-book, and intends gathering a collection of specimens from his operator friends who know how to throw a fancy quill

Mr. Peterson will be glad to receive samples of penmanship from any railroad or commercial telegrapher who writes a typical telegraph hand

Needless to say, the many penmanship scrap-books now being started throughout the country will be a source of pleasure to present day as well as future telegraphers who have an opportunity to browse through their pages.

TELEGRAPH PHONE RECEIVER.

W. P. R., Winnipeg, Manitoba.—It is possible to receive dot-and-dash Morse signals from a telegraph wire by means of an ordinary telephone receiver, and without altering any of the regular telegraph instrument connections.

The scheme you suggest would work, but it is somewhat complicated, and would affect the operating current value in the main-line circuit by eliminating the resistance of the relay. This would not be permitted by the superintendent of telegraph having jurisdiction over the line.

A simpler method is to connect the telephone receiver in series with a small condenser—any capacity less than one microfarad—and then by means of test-clips connect the condenser and phone circuit to the two main line binding-posts of the relay. Signals passing over the line will be registered both by the relay and the telephone If it is desired to shut off the relay signals, it is necessary only to adjust the back-stop screw of the relay so that the armature cannot move.

In order that calls may be received on the sounder, however, care should be taken to readjust the relay armature for that purpose

JAMES H. JOHNSON.

S. S. J., Seattle, Washington.—James H. Johnson, who now is assistant to the general superintendent of the Northern Pacific Railway Company, St. Paul, Minnesota, learned telegraphy in Canada, and in 1891 was advanced to the position of despatcher at North Bay, Ontario, on the main line of the C. P. R. Later Mr. Johnson worked as agent on the line of the Chicago and Great Western Railway, in Iowa, and in 1904 entered the service of the Northern Pacific Railway, at St Paul, Minnesota Since that time he has been employed as despatcher and as trainmaster until his appointment as assistant to the general superintendent.

KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN.

A. K. H., Cedar Rapids, Iowa.—Mr. R. L. Logan is superintendent of telegraph of the Kansas City Southern Railway, with headquarters at Kansas City Missouri.

C., M. AND ST. PAUL RAILWAY.

G. R. C., Columbus, Ohio.—The latest statement we have seen in regard to the relative use of the telegraph and the telephone on the lines of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway shows that 6,262 miles are operated by telegraph, and 3,948 miles by means of telephone train despatching circuits.

ALASKA DISTANCES.

SGT. T. N. E., Omaha, Nebraska.—The distances between radio stations in Alaska are as follows: Fort Egbert to Circle, 162 miles; Circle to Fairbanks, 180 miles; Fairbanks to Gibbon, 150 miles; Gibbon to Nome, 390 miles; Nome to St Michael, 131 miles, Petersburg to Wrangell, 49 miles

ARMY SERVICE AND WOUND CHEVRONS.

T. K. F., Springfield, Illinois.—The service and wound chevrons worn by signal corps members are the same as those worn by other units of the army. Army General Orders, No. 53, paragraph 4, states that.

A gold chevron of standard material and design, to be worn on the lower half of the left sleeve of all uniform coats, except fatigue coats, by each officer, field clerk, and enlisted man who has served six months in a theater of operations during the present war as an officer, field clerk, or enlisted man of the armies of the United States, and an additional gold chevron for each six months of similar service thereafter.

A sky-blue cloth chevron of the same pattern and worn in the same manner as the gold chevron by each officer, field clerk, and enlisted man who has served under the conditions prescribed for the gold chevron, but has left the theater of operations prior to the completion of six months' service therein. Should a person subsequently return to the theater of operations for duty therein, the blue cloth chevron will be replaced by the gold chevron upon the completion of a total of six months of service in the theater of operations, after which only gold chevrons will be worn to indicate war service. The right to wear war-service chevrons is limited to those officers, field clerks, and enlisted men whose official duty requires their presence in a theater of operations, as distinguished from those who may visit such a theater without having been ordered thereto for duty. The term "theater of operations" is defined in Field Service Regulations, 1914, as corrected to April 15, 1917.

War service chevrons of the same material and design and similarly placed will be worn on the coat, overcoat, or waist of their prescribed uniform by all other uniformed personnel of the authorized Military Establishment. They will be worn under the same conditions as prescribed for officers, field clerks, and enlisted men

Wound chevrons

A gold chevron of pattern identical with that of the war-service chevron, to be worn on the lower half of the right sleeve of all uniform coats, except fatigue coats, by each officer, field clerk, and enlisted man who has received or who may hereafter receive a wound in action with the enemy, or as the result of an act of the enemy, which necessitates treatment by a medical officer, and an additional chevron for each additional wound; but not more than one chevron will be worn for two or more wounds received at the same time. Disablement by gas necessitating treatment by a medical officer shall be considered to be a wound within the meaning of this order.

Wound chevrons of the same material and design and similarly placed will be worn on the coat, overcoat, or waist of their prescribed uniform by all other uniformed personnel of the authorized Military Establishment. They will be worn under the same conditions as prescribed for officers, field clerks, and enlisted men

TELEPOST COMPANY.

W. R. D., Washington, District of Columbia.—The Telepost Company, promoting the Delany Automatic Telegraph System, was incorporated under the laws of the State of Maine in the year 1907, with a capital of $18,000,000. Mr. H. Lee Sellers is president of the company.

GLASS AND PORCELAIN INSULATORS.

G. B. C, Baltimore, Maryland.—The only railroad we know of which uses white porcelain insulators to a greater extent than glass is the Canadian Pacific Railway in Canada.

HARRIGAN!

BY MAX BRAND,

Author of "Above the Law," "Devil Ritter," "Fate's Honeymoon," "Who Am I?" "A Rendezvous with Death," etc.

Untamed and Unafraid, He Fought Fiercely for the Heart of the Woman He Loved. Yet, in the End—

A FIVE-PART STORY—PART FIVE.

CHAPTER XXXV.

COMFORT IN HELL.

S Campbell was dragged away the bosun said to his companions: "Now, lads, you see where Campbell stands!"

They growled for answer.

"But I'll get him!" went on Hovey. "I'm going to kill Van Roos and Borgson by inches before his eyes. And when he sees 'em die—they'd have to die, anyway, before we reach shore—Campbell will be water in our hands. He'll see 'em die, an' them in the wireless house will see 'em die. Their throats are thick with thirst by now. We'll show 'em water an' food, an' offer it to 'em if they'll give up Henshaw. If they won't, we'll show 'em how we'll kill 'em when they're too weak to resist. They'll see a sample in Van Roos an' Borgson. Every yell they let out 'll be an argument for us. We'll have Henshaw yet—we'll have him before the day's done."

Sam Hall pushed his thick fingers slowly through his hair, stupefied by this careful cruelty, and even the one eye of Jacob Flint grew dim, but Garry Cochrane slapped the bosun on the shoulder heartily.

"Jerry," he said, "you got the makin's of a great man. Let's go start the fun."

On the way aft they passed the negroes of the fire-room sprawling on the shady side of the deck. They stumbled to their feet at sight of Hovey, and swore volubly that the hole of the ship was too hot for a man to live in it five minutes. Hovey passed them without a word. He had to tend to Campbell now, and without an engineer it was useless to work men in the fire-room. After the engineer had been brought to his reason it would be a simple affair to handle the lazy firemen.

First of all he had two buckets of water carried aft and placed just below the edge of the raised deck which supported the wireless house. There were dippers floating invitingly on the surface of the water in each bucket. Then from the galley of the ship Kamasura and Shida, the cabin-boys, brought out steaming meats and cut loaves of bread and displayed the feast near the buckets of water. Upon this outlay gazed the famine-stricken fugitives, Sloan, McTee, and Harrigan; Kate did not see, for she was caring for the sick captain. Hovey advanced and made a speech.

"We're actin' generous and open to you," he began. "We're offerin' you food an' water—all you want—in exchange for White Henshaw. D' you think you're gainin' anything by playin' soft with Henshaw? No, you ain't. His money's gone. We've got it. He ain't got a thing to reward you with. Besides, he sold his soul to hell long ago, an' we've come to claim payment. It's overdue, that's what it is!"

"Aye, aye!" came a chorus of yells from the sailors who swarmed on the other side of the waist of the ship. "White Henshaw's overdue."

"Look at this here water," went on Hovey, with a tempting wave of his hand. "You're burnin' up with thirst, lads, an' I know it. Why not take this up an' help yourselves—after you've given us Henshaw?"

Sloan crowded in between Harrigan and McTee; his voice was a slavering murmur: "For God's sake, boys, what we going to do?"

Harrigan and the big Scot exchanged glances. Their giant frames were tortured far more by the famine than was the wiry operator, but their square jaws were hard set and thrusting out. Faintly and slowly they smiled. There was a profound mutual understanding in that smile. Men in the trenches look at each other like this before they go over the top.

"I'm dying," went on Sloan eagerly and still in that slavering voice. "I'm burnin' up inside. For God's sake, boys, he's near dead anyway. It 'd be a mercy to let 'em take him and finish him off!"

And always as he spoke his quick eyes went back and forth from face to face. They had neither eye nor voice for him. They turned their attention back to Hovey, who now spoke again hastily, seeing that he had made an impression upon at least one of the trio of men.

"But if you don't give us Henshaw, we'll take him, anyway. In one more day—or maybe two at the most you'll be too weak to resist. Even you, Harrigan, that McTee an' Henshaw couldn't break between 'em—even you'll be weaker than a baby a kid could handle you in the end of two days. Then we'll come an' get you—understand? An' what we'll do to you when we get you will be this!"

He gestured over his shoulder. Eric Borgson was being led out on the deck by some of the crew, who kicked and shoved him along.

"Look him over, Cap'n McTee. He's a big man, an' we're goin' to kill him by inches. So we're goin' to finish Van Roos—the same way. You'll get what they get if you try to hold out. Understand? But if you turn over Henshaw to us—why, we'll give you enough food an' water to keep you livin' on the fat of the land. Speak out, lads, d' you want to die like these two are goin' to die, or will you turn over Henshaw—who needs killin'?"

Sloan leaped to his feet, yelling: "We'll give him up! Pass up the water!"

Harrigan turned his head a few inches. "Stop barkin', you dog," he muttered.

"Are you all one on that?" called Hovey joyously

"We'll see you damned, Hovey," said McTee

"Then *I'll* turn him over!" screamed Sloan, gone mad with the thirst. "Come up an' help me fight these two!"

He fell upon Harrigan with hands and feet. A yell like the baying of wolves hard on the heels of a tired elk answered him, and the sailors swept across the deck. Hovey began to clamber up the steps. But Harrigan was already on his feet and disposed of the gibbering Sloan with a single blow on a selected point on the jaw. The wireless operator slumped to the deck, and Harrigan stood over the ladder with legs braced to the sway of the ship, and his great fists balled.

"Come on up, Jerry dear; what's been keepin' you back so long?"

McTee, apparently oblivious to the danger, had not even risen to his feet to meet this crisis. Now he smiled benevolently down upon the upturned, furious faces of the mutineers. They scattered back, growling, at length, and as Harrigan took up his former position beside McTee the Scotchman muttered: "Harrigan, I could drink blood."

"An' lick your lips afther it," groaned the Irishman softly. "An' so could I, Angus! They're startin' their devil work. Let's go inside. I can't be standin' the sight of it, McTee."

"Go inside an' let 'em rush the wireless house?" said McTee incredulously. "No, lad. We *got* to stay an' watch. Besides, maybe this is the way we'll all die—after we're too weak to fight 'em, as our friend Hovey suggests. And I'm rather curious to learn just how I'll die; I've always been!"

They were binding Borgson face down on the hatch

"Look," said Harrigan. "Maybe it ain't goin' to be so bad as we thought.

They're just goin' to lick Borgson the way he licked the Jap."

"They'll do more," replied McTee, shaking his head. "Henshaw and Borgson and Van Roos have really put those wild men through hell, and now they're going to get it back with interest. What's that fellow doing over there? Whittling? By the Lord, they're cool about it—these devils."

The sailor, apparently, was cutting a round hole through a small piece of board, using his pocket-knife. He was the man whom Harrigan had slashed across the face with the knife, and now he wore a stained, dirty bandage across one eye and covering most of his head. He whistled as he worked. In the mean time little Kamasura stepped out from the crowd. He was naked to the waist, for the raw incisions which the lash had left would not bear the weight of clothes. When he turned they could see the marks of the whip—great, purple welts mingled with black marks, the places where the lash had cut the skin now dark with dried blood. He carried the blacksnake in his hands, drawing it caressingly through his hands as Borgson had done. Now the tying of Borgson was completed, and the sailors spread back in a loose circle to watch their entertainment. Kamasura came close, leaned, and muttered something in the ear of the prone man. Borgson replied with an inarticulate, savage snarl.

Apparently the sound pleased the Japanese. He straightened and made a pace back, laughing silently. The white teeth flashed in the yellow face. He took his distance carefully, shifting repeatedly a matter of inches to make sure that no stroke would be wasted. Then he whirled the blacksnake over his head. They could see Borgson wince as the lash sang above him, and the muscles of his bare back flexed and stood up in knots that glistened under the sunlight. But the stroke did not fall. Kamasura had learned the lesson of creating suspense from the very man he was now about to torture. Harrigan bowed his head in his hands.

"I can't look, McTee," he muttered. "I'm sick inside—sick—sick!"

The Scotchman kept his black eyes steadily upon the figures of Borgson and the Jap.

"I suppose Borgson is only getting his due," he said, "but, ah, man, I'd like to have that yellow demon under my hand for one minute—one minute!"

The last words came in a growl from the hollow of his throat. The blacksnake whirled through the air again and fell with a sharp slap like two broad hands clapped together, but Borgson did not cry out. His body writhed mutely, and down his back appeared a red mark. The whip whirled again and fell, this time bringing a stifled curse for a response. Once more it whirled, and this time merely cracked in the air. Again and again an idle snap in the air. Broken by that grim suspense, Borgson yelled aloud, not in pain but in hoarse terror.

Kamasura laughed and glanced at the circle of sailors like a ringmaster in a circus in search of applause. He saw a pack of gloating faces. When the end of the world comes, if its coming is announced beforehand, there will be many and strange crimes enacted; this was the end of the world to the sailors, and they were the spirits chosen to be saved from the general ruin. They leaned back; they smote each other on the shoulder in silent rapture; they criticized the swinging of the whip; they shouted advice to Kamasura, such as "Stand back another foot! Make the lash snap when you hit! Faster!"

And Kamasura, nodding and smiling, heard nothing. The sight of the blood on the white back beneath his whip maddened him as it is said the taste of living flesh maddens a beast of prey. The whip now whirled rapidly over his head and fell again and again, and every stroke brought a fresh and louder scream from the mate. Another sound, rhythmic and barbarous, punctuated those shrieks of anguish. It was the singing of Kamasura, who as he wielded the lash remembered a chant of his native land and shouted it now in time with the blows of the blacksnake. And the screaming of the tortured man, the sight of the flowing blood which now was smeared and spattered across Borgson's raw back, the wild singing of Kamasura, acted like liquor on

the brains of the mutineers. They had dreamed of a revenge full and soul-satisfying such as this. They had not dared to hope that the dream would come true; but seeing it realized they fell to dancing and brandishing their fists, and soon an inferno of shouts rose from the waist of the ship, a writhing, twisting, demoniac mass of humanity.

On the upper deck Sloan lay prone on his face, sobbing with terror; Harrigan kept his face hid and clutched at his head with both hands; McTee stared straight down upon the scene of the torture with burning eyes. Inside the wheel-house Kate crouched beside the bunk on which Henshaw was stretched. He had raved all the day before and all the night, tormented by thirst and delirious with fever and the pain of his wound. That morning he had fallen into an uneasy sleep brought on by the exhaustion, but now he wakened and lay staring straight above his head. The fever had deprived him of the last of his senses.

"Your hands!" he muttered at length.

She placed them upon his forehead. She had done that repeatedly during the past day, and each time the effect had been marvelously soothing to the old man. Now at the touch he closed his eyes and drew a deep breath of relief.

"Even in hell," he whispered at length — "even in hell you come to me, Beatrice! I knew you would!"

He caught her hands at the wrists; his fingers, despite his fever, were deadly cold and a chill ate into her blood. He pulled her hands down from his face and looked at her so calmly that she thought for the moment that his right senses had returned.

"I hear them yelling—the souls of the damned," he said quietly. "You can't hear it?"

His voice was merely curious, not terrified, sorrowful, or despairing.

"No, no!" she said. "I cannot hear!"

"Of course not," he went on with the same lack of emotion; "for you see you've come from heaven, and you can't hear or see what goes on in hell. And the coolness of heaven is in your hands, Beatrice. Put them against my temples, so! For every bit of the love I have given you you are permitted to repay me with coolness—coolness and comfort in hell!"

Suddenly he broke into laughter, exultant laughter that stopped her heart, a sound more terrible than the wild wails from the deck.

"See!" he said, and his eyes twinkled as he stretched out a gaunt arm toward a corner of the room. "There's Johnny Carson lying naked on a bed of blue fire. Ha, ha, ha!"

He raised himself with infinite labor on one elbow and spoke to the corner which he had designated: "No, Johnny, I'm in hell, but I'm only a visitor. Yes, I sent you here, Johnny, but I haven't come to join you. For Beatrice she has come down from heaven with snow in the tips of her fingers, and she has brushed the hell-fire clean away from me, so I sit here comfortable, Johnny, and watch you burn. Ha, ha, ha! Have you been waiting long for me to come, lad?"

She pressed him back on the bunk, and for a moment he was too helpless with laughter to resist. She shut out the hungry, hideous light of his eyes with the palms of her hands. Now the screaming on the deck ceased abruptly.

"Beatrice!" he cried with a sudden terror.

"Yes," answered Kate.

"Ah," he said, and patted her hands endearingly. "When the silence came I feared maybe you were leaving me. You won't do that?"

"No."

"Good girl! Dear Beatrice! No, you'll stay with your grandad, eh?"

He was wheedling her as one talks to a little child.

"Yes, I'll stay."

"So! Then I'll sleep. But waken me when they begin yelling again. I want to see 'em. I want to gloat over 'em. They thought I'd come down to the same hell I sent them to, and that they'd watch me burn. But I fooled 'em, Beatrice, by loving you. You're the chip of wood that keeps my mouth above water, keeps me afloat –afloat afloat—"

And he drifted into sleep, while she

crouched on the floor again and leaned against the bunk, almost unconscious from fear and exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TORTURE.

THE yelling of Borgson had stopped when he fainted. Once or twice Kamasura lashed him after his body relaxed on the hatch cover, but he was torn away from his prey.

"Kamasura," said Jacob Flint, "you're one big fool! Would you go ahead and beat him to death while he's in a faint? No, lad! Wait till we bring him round so he can taste all you give him, eh?"

"And I'm the one to bring him to," said the sailor who had been busily cutting the little round hole in the board with his pocket-knife. "I've been expectin' this an' waitin' till you needed me."

"How'll you bring him round?" asked Hovey curiously. "Maybe we better start work on Van Roos while Borgson is gettin' his senses back."

The sailor with the bandaged head broke in hastily: "There ain't no use at all in wastin' time. We'll finish Borgson while we're about it. Look!"

He took one of the mate's hands and slipped the middle finger of Borgson's hand through the hole in the board; the large joint, however, refused to pass through.

"Aye," said the sailor in triumph, "I knew I hadn't forgotten the way to make 'em or the size!"

They watched him with wonder, totally unable to guess what he would do, until he began to apply pressure on the board against the bones of the finger-joint. He pressed down with both hands and with all his weight. The result was that the flesh was scraped from the bone and the bone itself crushed in as the board passed down the finger. Borgson woke with a shriek, and the sailor jerked the board away. It carried most of the flesh on the finger with it.

"Finish him," commanded Sam Hall to the Jap. "I'm gettin' tired of this show. It's too long. I've got a little trick to play on Van Roos that's worth a hundred of these stunts."

Kamasura, in nowise loath to bring his work to an end, stood back and laid on the whip with redoubled vigor. The lash spatted sharply against the raw and bleeding flesh; and red spray fell over the deck and upon the half-naked body of the Jap. The screams sank into moans, and the moans in turn declined to a mere horrible gasping of the breath, a bubbling sound as if there were water in the man's throat. Even this ceased at length, and the quivering of the body stopped. Kamasura leaned over and slipped his hand under the body in the region of the heart. When he straightened up again he tossed the whip to the deck and made a gesture of finality with his crimsoned hands. The mate was dead.

They cut his body loose at once and pitched him over the rail; then turned their attention to Van Roos. Sam Hall was the inspired man this time, and according to his directions they lashed the body of the big mate on the same blood-spotted hatch-cover where Borgson had lain a moment before, but this time the victim was placed upon his back. Hall himself attended to the tying of Van Roos's head, and he performed his work so ably that the mate could not change his position in the least particle. He was literally swathed in ropes, so much so, in fact, that it was difficult to see how he could be tormented. Sam Hall, however, insisted that this was what he wanted, and the crew consented to let him do his work; he had suffered nameless agonies at the hands of the big Dutchman

"You've heard something, an' you've seen something," said Hovey at this juncture to Campbell; "but what you've seen and heard isn't nothin' to what 'll happen to you unless you start handling the engines of the Heron. Why, Campbell, I'm goin' to give you to the blacks of the fireroom!"

The engineer turned pale indeed

"Speak up," said Hovey. "I don't make no bones about it. We need you, an' if we got to do it, I'll get the niggers to persuade you with something besides words. Will you run the ship?"

"Hovey," answered the engineer calmly, "the only place I'd run this ship would be down to hell—your home port. That's final!"

The bosun was white with rage and his eye yearned like a painter's toward his picture

"I'd like to tear your heart out an' feed it to the fish," he said, stepping close to Campbell, and then, remembering himself, he moved back and grinned: "But the blacks will find something better to do with you."

He crossed the deck and held up a bucket of water toward Harrigan and McTee. He raised a dipperful and allowed it to splash back in the bucket. The writhen faces of the two big men were a mute tribute of praise to this consummate touch.

"Well?" asked Hovey.

They merely stared at him as if they had not heard him speak. There was no need for them to consult each other.

"All right," said Hovey, quite unmoved, "there's plenty of time for you to make up your minds. But if you wait too long—well, we'll come and get him. And the girl, too, Harrigan; and the girl, too, McTee!"

He laughed and turned away.

Harrigan glared stupidly at McTee; and then they spoke at the same instant in the same words: "I forgot the girl!"

"I thought," muttered McTee, "that we could end it by simply dying but I forgot the girl."

"The girl," answered Harrigan, "and —and them!"

He spoke again after a moment: "There's only one way, Angus. She's got to die before we're too far gone. You'll do that to save her from—them?"

McTee moistened his parched lips before he could speak.

"One of us has to do it, but it can't be me, Harrigan."

"Nor me, Angus. We'll wait till tonight. Something may happen. Maybe a ship 'll pass and see us lyin' like a derelict and put a boat aboard, eh?"

"Of course I've been dreaming of that. But if no ship comes?"

"Then we'll draw straws, eh?"

"Yes."

And so the matter was settled, but all the rest of that day they avoided each other's eyes. Two sharp, sudden cries now called their attention back to the waist of the ship to the blood-stained hatch-cover where Van Roos lay.

Sam Hall had approached the big mate with a knife in his hand. He kneeled beside the prostrate body and fumbled at the face an instant. No one had been able to make out the significance of his act. Then the knife gleamed, and twice he plucked with one hand and cut with the knife. The two sharp cries answered him. Then he rose; two little trickles of blood ran down the face of the mate.

"Well?" asked Jacob Flint as Hall returned to the waiting circle of the sailors. "When does the game begin?"

"The game is just started," said Hall, "an' the sun will do the rest. I've cut off his eyelids!"

They stared a moment in amazement, and then an understanding broke on them. Every tribe of savages in the world has been accredited with this ingenious torture which blinded their victim and usually drove him mad. The sun was now climbing the sky rapidly, and already fell full on the face of the mate. Every one has one time or another glanced inadvertently up at the sun and bowed his head again, dazzled and half stunned by that burst of white light, but to this torture Van Roos was wholly given, not for a single glance, but a stare which he could not avoid, a stare into the blazing circle, a look which would last for hours. The tropic sun which scorches and burns the toughest of skins was now directed full on the pupils of his eyes.

The sailors sought comfortable positions and waited for a long exhibition of pain, but they were mistaken. The torture acted far more quickly than even the whip. There was no outcry. Not once during his struggles did Van Roos make a sound from his throat, save for a quick, heavy panting for which the sailors canted their heads forward and listened carefully. For some reason, perhaps by contrast with the yells

of Borgson, which were still in the ears of the men, this silence was more eloquently horrible than the most throat-filling shrieks. They could see Van Roos twisting his head ceaselessly and vainly to escape that blinding light. His ruddy face turned to purple with the violence, and then became positively black, swollen like the features of a drowned man. And that was all that happened—only that slight, almost imperceptible, silent writhing, minute after minute, and the panting, the quick, choppy panting like a running man. Finally one of the sailors rose with a mallet in his hand.

"Where you goin'?" asked Hall ominously.

"Going to finish him."

Hall caught the fellow's arm.

"Listen!" he whispered, and such was the silence that the hoarse whisper was audible all over the dock. "Don't you hear?"

And with one hand he kept beat for the quick breaths of the tortured man. At that moment there was a movement more convulsive than any which had come before; the swathing ropes actually creaked with the gigantic effort; there was a long sigh, and the breathing stopped. Hall strode angrily forward to his victim, but when he reached the hatch Van Roos was dead. A blood-vessel must have burst in his brain, and death was as instantaneous as though a bullet had struck him. So they cut him free, and his body followed that of Borgson over the rail. Then the eyes of the mutineers turned aft toward the wireless house, and then back upon Campbell. Six victims remained. One of the negroes slipped close to Hovey on naked feet. He did not speak, but his long, thin arm pointed toward the engineer.

"Not yet," said Hovey, "not yet! We'll give him rope for a little while. To-morrow if he doesn't give in we'll turn you loose on him."

The negro grinned and went back on noiseless feet to his companions to spread the good tidings. They were willing to wait; patience was inbred in them. Hovey approached the wireless house.

"We've got one show left to offer, but we're savin' it till to-morrow," he said. "So brace up, hearties, and keep cheer. You'll see Campbell go a way worse than either of these to-morrow. That 'll keep you from gettin' too dry in the throat."

"Wait," called Harrigan, suddenly roused. "D' you mean to say that you'd try your hell-work on a kind man like Campbell?"

"A kind man like Campbell?" echoed Hovey, and then laughed: "A kind man?"

And he retreated with no other answer, and left the fugitives aft to the merciless, sweltering heat of the sun, which waxed incredibly till late in the afternoon. By the time the sun went down they were so fevered by the need of water and so weak from lack of food that they had not the strength to bless the cool falling of the dark; they still carried the fire of the sunlight in their blood.

The night had scarcely come when a shrill cry from Sloan brought Harrigan and McTee to the larboard side. The wireless operator could not speak; he merely pointed north, and there they made out a light, and the two lights, close together, a passing ship. They stood for a moment merely drawing in their breath as if they were drinking water, and then they fell to shrieking and dancing like madmen; from the forward part of the ship came a low and ominous rumbling which proved that the mutineers had sighted the ship and understood perfectly what it would mean if they were discovered. Voices called orders; there was a running here and there; every light in the cabin windows was instantly extinguished. The lights of the stranger grew brighter.

The fugitives hunted for any possible means of making a light, but not one of them had matches, and the electric lights of the wireless house, of course, were useless since the burning out of the dynamo. Nearer and nearer drew the steamer. They could see the lights of her cabin windows distinctly. She was apparently some large freighter. Only a needle-point of light would have been sufficient to signal her, but they had not a single match. They ran to the rear rail and yelled in unison again and again till they were hoarse and their

dry throats ached, but the stranger swept swiftly on into the distance. And then, when the lights were growing smaller, when they had ceased their shouting and stood in mute despair, Sloan remembered a pocket electric lantern which lay in the wireless house.

He ran for it, weeping like a broken-hearted child, and clambering to the top of the wireless house he commenced flashing Morse code after the ship. But it was far too late, apparently. The ship was too far away, and the pocket torch was too small and the light too near the water. No signal came in response from the stranger, and soon the mast and headlights were hull down on the horizon. Sloan, still sobbing hoarsely, came back from the top of the structure and sprawled upon the deck hopelessly, ready to die. He began to importune Harrigan and McTee to surrender White Henshaw to the mutineers; he crawled at their feet and begged. They kicked him away and sat down by themselves to commune.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FIRE.

"WE'VE got to tell the girl," said Harrigan.

"That's so. Go ahead and speak with her, Dan."

"I'll call her out. Henshaw is asleep, and she can leave him."

She had not come out of the wireless house since Henshaw was carried within. She alone could tend to the wounded skipper; when the men came nearer him he broke into ravings. All that time she had uttered no complaints, but held, hollow-eyed and straight-lipped, to her task.

"How can you stand up to it?" McTee and Harrigan had asked her.

A shadow of her old spirit came back in her eyes as she answered with a smile for each of them in turn: "Because of the Irish in me—and the Scotch!"

So now they called her out on deck, and she came with a tottering step, for only the excitement of fighting for Henshaw's life had sustained her to this point. They spoke abruptly, without emotion, and straight to the point. It was McTee who explained.

"None of us can possibly last more than another day."

"Yes," she answered.

"And when we're helpless Hovey and his gang will rush the wireless house and take us all. They'll take you among the rest."

"Well?"

"Don't you understand?"

"I do now."

"Kate, there's one shot left in that revolver, and when there's no strength left in us to protect you, when there's no longer any hope, then either Harrigan or I shall fire the shot."

"Thank you."

"Which of us do you choose?"

Harrigan broke in: "Choose Angus, Kate dear. Me hand is that unsteady I could not hold the gun straight—not to be shootin' mesilf."

"He's wrong," said McTee hastily, "for the sun has affected my eyes, and it would be almost impossible for me to do this."

She found them in the dark and laid a hand on either of their shoulders. There was a moan from the wireless house.

"You shall decide between you—Dan or Angus; I must go back to my dead man."

She stepped close to them and kissed them one after another, and then went back to Henshaw.

"It's plain," said Harrigan, and his voice trembled. "She kissed you first, which means that she chose you to fire the shot, Angus."

"You lie!" answered the other hotly. "She kissed you last, which shows that she chose you finally."

"We must draw the straws," said Harrigan. "There's no other way. But there's one thing first. This man Campbell, he's a true man, McTee, and he stood up to White Henshaw for my sake—for the sake of me and his Bobbie Burns. They plan to take him to hell to-morrow, Angus, and I've an idea that there's one chance in the thousand that I could steal in on the dogs to-night and bring him back with me."

"Can they do anything worse to him than they're doing to us?"

"Maybe not, but my heart would lie easier, McTee. Ah-h, lad, he shtood up to Henshaw for the sake of a song, he's a bould man. Let me make the thry for him, Angus?"

"And leave the gun with me?"

There was silence.

"Well, then, go ahead."

"Thank ye, lad. I'll go soon, but I'll wait for the fever o' the sun to go out of me head an' for the crew to get drunk an' a little drunker."

So they waited while the noise of the nightly carousal waxed high and higher, and then died away by slow degrees. At length Harrigan stood up, gripped the hand of McTee in silent farewell, heard a whispered "Good luck!" and slipped noiselessly down the ladder and started across the deck in the shadow of the rail. From any portion of the main cabin eyes might be watching him; there was only the one chance in ten that the lookout whom Hovey had certainly stationed would not perceive him as he crept along under the shadow. Accordingly he went blindly and carelessly forward. To die in this adventure was at least better than to die when he was too weak to struggle against death. Now he was lean and tormented indeed, but still his power was hardly decreased, and what he lacked in ordinary strength was made up for, perhaps, in nervous impulse.

If the lookout saw him, at least there was no outcry, no general alarm. He stood flat against the wall of the main cabin at length and rehearsed a plan, listening the while to the lapping of the waves against the side of the ship. Then he stole step by step up the ladder to the upper deck. His head was already above the ladder when he heard the light padding of a bare foot and saw a figure round the corner of the cabin.

Harrigan ducked out of sight and clung to the iron rounds ready to leap up and strike if the sailor should descend the ladder, though in that case the alarm would be given and his errand spoiled; but the sailor was apparently the lookout set there by Hovey. He stayed at the head of the ladder a moment, humming to himself, and then turned and walked on his beat to the other side of the ship. Harrigan slipped onto the deck and ran noiselessly to the side of the cabin. Here he flattened himself against the wall until the sentinel had again made the turn of his beat, and as the latter moved dimly out of sight through the darkness the Irishman stole down the deck toward the forward cabins.

The first two windows showed dark and empty; if there were any one inside he must be asleep in the drunken torpor into which most of the crew seemed to have fallen. The door of the third room, formerly occupied by the second mate, stood ajar, and here by the dull light of an oil lantern which jarred against the wall with the swing of the ship, he saw Campbell tied hand and foot to a chair. He was placed close to a little table whereon sat a bottle of whisky, a siphon of seltzer, a tall glass, meat, bread, water—everything, in fact, with which the senses of the starving man could be tormented. And near him, sitting with elbows spread out on the edge of the table, was one of the negro firemen, grinning continually as if he had just heard some monstrous joke. The expression of Campbell was just as fixed, for his small eyes shifted eagerly, swiftly, from the food to the water, and back again.

The negro—the same tall, gaunt fellow who had demanded that Hovey turn over Campbell to him and his companions that day—now leaned forward and raised a dipper of water from a bucket which sat on the floor, and allowed it to trickle back, splashing with what seemed to Harrigan the sweetest music in the world. Hovey must have taught him that trick, and its effect upon Campbell was worse than the beating of whips. The negro let his head roll loosely back as he laughed, and while his head was still back and his eyes squinting shut in the ecstasy of his delight, Harrigan leaped from the shadow of the door and struck at the throat—at the great Adam's apple which shook with the laughter. The blow must have nearly broken the man's neck. His head jerked forward with a whistling gasp of breath, and as he reached for the knife on the table Harrigan struck

again, this time just behind the ear. The negro went limp as a starched cloth when water is thrown upon it; he slid from his chair to the floor and lay in a queer heap —as if all the bones in his body were broken.

"Harrigan! Harrigan! Harrigan!" Campbell was whispering over and over, but still his eyes held like those of a starved wolf on the food. The moment his ropes were cut he buried his teeth in the great chunk of roasted meat.

Harrigan jerked him away and held him by main force.

"Be a man!" he whispered. "We've got to take this food and this water back to the wireless house—if we can get there with it. Take hold of yourself, Campbell!"

The engineer nodded; he was making beast noises deep in his throat, and Harrigan feared for a moment that the man had gone insane from his sufferings. Voices came close down the deck; instantly Harrigan jerked up the glass globe which protected the lantern's flame and blew out the light. They crouched shoulder to shoulder.

"I thought he was in here," said a voice at the door.

"He was," answered Hovey's voice, "but I guess the blacks took him below—they said it was too cool for him up there. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will he give in?"

"He'll give in to-morrow or I'll turn the firemen loose. I've promised them, and they're licking their lips already. What's that?"

Campbell had stirred involuntarily in his cramped position.

"Light a match," muttered the second man.

There was a scratch and a spurt of blue flame which flickered and grew to a yellow flame, and by the light it seemed to Harrigan that everything in the room was illumined as brightly as by the sun, but apparently the two could make out nothing certainly, and the wind puffed out the match almost at once. The table had shielded the two fugitives from observation.

"Light another," said one of the two mutineers.

"No," said Hovey; "there's nothing here."

Their steps disappeared down the deck. After that Harrigan dared not show a light in the cabin window. He and Campbell located the meat and bread, which were given into the engineer's keeping, while Harrigan took the bucket of water. They slipped out onto the deck and hurried aft, keeping close to the side of the cabin, for the starlight would show their figures to any watchful eyes. At the rear edge of the cabin Harrigan halted Campbell and whispered:

"There's a guard here. I got past him in the dark, but two of us loaded down like this can never go unseen down that ladder We've got to get rid of him."

And he pulled out the knife which he had kept with him ever since the outbreak of the mutiny. Campbell was shaking like a leaf. He had stood the long horror of the torture without a murmur, but the prospect of liberty completely unnerved him.

They waited without daring to draw breath until the sailor came paddling by with his naked feet. Harrigan crept out behind him, and when the sailor turned at the rail the Irishman leaped in and struck, not with the blade, but with the haft of the knife; he could not kill from behind.

If it had been a solid blow the sailor would have crumpled silently as the negro had done a few moments before, but the impact glanced and merely cut his scalp as it knocked him down. He fell with a shout which was instantly answered from the front of the ship.

"Down the ladder! Run for it!" cried Harrigan to Campbell, and as the engineer clambered down he stood guard above.

The sailor leaped up from the deck and lunged with a knife gleaming in his hand, but Harrigan slashed him across the arm, and he fled howling into the dark. Before Hovey and his men could reach the spot Harrigan had climbed down the ladder with his precious bucket and was fleeing aft to the wireless house.

As he reached it, lights were showing from the main cabin, and there were cho-

ruses of yells announcing the discovery that Campbell was missed. But Harrigan and the rest of the fugitives scarcely heard the sounds. The Irishman was busy measuring as carefully as he could in the dark dippers of water which the others drank. The effect was strange on them. McTee, after the cool liquid had touched his throat, burst into thunderous song; Kate was silent, for the most part, but now and then she laughed low and musically; Harrigan chattered ceaselessly of a thousand things, like a man who has drunk too much; Sloan sobbed like a woman who hears unexpected good tidings.

There was no sleep that night, partly from fear lest the infuriated mutineers should at last attempt to rush the wireless house, partly because they ate sparingly but long of the meat which Harrigan carved for them, and the bread, and partly also because of a singular odor which they had not noticed when they were tortured by thirst and hunger, and which now they observed for the first time. It was peculiarly pungent and heavy with a sickening suggestion of sweetness about it. None of them could describe it, saving Harrigan, who had been much in the country and likened the odor to the smell of an old straw stack which has become impregnated by the rain and lay moldering and rotting.

It seemed to increase—that smell—during the night, probably because their strength was returning and all their senses grew more acute. It was a torrid night, without moon, so that the blanket of dark pressed the heat down upon them and seemed to stifle the very breath. The boards of the deck were warm to the touch, as if sunshine were falling upon them, and it was impossible to lie down and sleep on account of their warmth. So they roved ceaselessly about the small deck.

With the coming of the first light of the dawn they noticed a peculiar phenomenon. Perhaps it was because of the evaporation of water under the fire of the sun, but the Heron seemed to be surrounded with a white vapor which rose shimmering in the slant rays of the morning. But even when the sun had risen well up in the sky the vapor was still visible, clinging like a wraith about the ship. They wondered idly upon it, and wondered still more at the heat, which was now intense to an unprecedented degree for that hour of the day. They were interrupted in their conjectures by the call of Kate summoning them to the wireless house where Henshaw lay apparently at the last gasp.

He had altered marvelously in the past two days. His whole body seemed to have withered, and the work of thirty years was wrought upon him; he looked like a centenarian. That resemblance which he had always had to a mummy was now oddly intensified, for the cheeks were fallen, the neck withered to scarcely half its former size, the eyes sunk in purple hollows, and the lips smiled continually that cruel, archaic smile. The eyes were open, yet oddly enough they suggested death more than any other feature, so glazed and sightless were they. He murmured without ceasing, his voice, which had always been low, now rising hardly above a low whisper, though every syllable was distinctly articulated. Kate sat beside him, passing her hands slowly over his temples, for he complained of a fire rising within his brain.

His complaints died away under her touches, and he said at last, calmly but very, very faintly: "Beatrice, there is one thing I have not yet told you."

"Yes?" she asked gently, though she averted her eyes, for all the long hours he had filled with the stories of his crimes upon earth were poured into the ear of the spirit of his Beatrice, as he thought. One last and crowning atrocity was yet to be told.

"I have left out the greatest thing of all."

He paused to smile at the memory.

"You remember Samson's death, Beatrice?"

"Yes."

"And how he pulled the house down on the shoulders of his enemies?"

"Yes."

"That was a wonderful way to die—wonderful! But I, Beatrice, look at me, child!—I have surpassed Samson! Listen! You will wonder and you will admire when you hear it! All my wealth—all my good gold and the pearls (they were drops of

white fire!)—I was bringing home to you to make you rich and happy, and when I got the word that you were dead I knew two things: first, that the prophecy of my death at sea would come true, and secondly that my gold must perish with me. You will never guess how long I pondered over a way to destroy my gold before I died! You will think I could have simply thrown it into the sea? Yes, but the ship was filled with men ready to mutiny, and they were hungry for my wealth. They would never have allowed me to destroy that gold! So I thought of a way—ah, it was an inspiration!—by which I could destroy my body, my wealth, and the lives of all the mutineers at once. Like Samson, I would pull the house on the heads of my enemies. Ha, ha, ha!"

His laughter was rather a grimace than a sound.

He went on: "See how cunningly, how carefully I worked! First I blew up the three life-boats so that there would be no escape for the crew. Then I tampered with the dynamo so that it burned out, and they could not send out a wireless call for help. That touch was the best of all. It was like denying speech to a starving man who has only to beg in order to get food. Well, well! Then I went down into the hold, deep down, and I started a fire in the cargo. And then—"

"Oh, my God!" stammered Sloan, and slumped against the wall of the cabin.

The others were white, but they gestured at Sloan to silence him. The whisper continued: "And then I knew that they were done for. The wheat would not break into a sudden flame, but it would smolder and glow and spread from hour to hour and from day to day. The crew would know nothing of it for a long time. But when they guessed at what was happening they would open the hatches to fight the fire with water. Then what would happen? Ah, my dear, there was the crowning touch, for when they opened the hatches the current of air would feed the fire and the ship would be instantly in flames. And so they would burn like dogs with water, water all around them, and no boats to put off in—no boats. Ha, ha, ha!"

He choked with his laughter and gasped for breath.

"If it were possible for a bodiless spirit to perish, I should think that I am dying twice, Beatrice. The air is thick—this air of hell! And always in my nostrils I have the odor of the smoldering wheat—the slowly burning wheat ready to burst into flames. Ha, ha, ha!"

He broke off short in his whispering and raised himself suddenly to an elbow. With the coming of death his voice grew strong and rang clearly: "They are in the corners—they are coming closer! Beatrice! Brush them away with your fingers as cold as snow. Beatrice, oh, my dear!"

And he was dead as he fell back on the bunk.

Sloan was already on the deck outside the wireless house, shrieking with all the power of his lungs: "Fire! Fire! The wheat in the hold!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FIGHT.

AND as Harrigan and McTee, followed by Kate and Campbell, ran out to the open air, they saw the crowd of the mutineers surge across the waist toward Sloan with upturned faces, wondering, and ready for terror. Hovey broke through their midst

"Hovey!" shouted McTee. "Look at the mist over the sides! Draw a breath; smell of it! It is fire! Henshaw has set fire in the hold!"

It was plain to every brain in the instant. To every man came the thought of the complaints of the firemen concerning the heat in the hold of the Heron; the noxious odor like musty straw; the warmth, the deadly warmth of the decks. A volcano smoldered beneath them, and the mist was the sign of the coming outbreak of flames. And the mutineers stood mute, gaping at one another, looking for some hope, some comfort, and finding the same question repeated in every eye. McTee climbed down the ladder to the waist, followed by the rest of the fugitives. Ten minutes before they would have been torn to pieces by the

wolf-pack. Now no man had a thought for anything save his own death.

"Hovey," ordered McTee in his voice of thunder, "tell these fellows they must obey my voice from now on."

They roared, snatching at this ghost of a hope: "We will! We'll follow Black McTee! Hovey has brought us to hell!"

In a moment every one was in frantic motion. Campbell started for the engine-room to see what had caused the stopping of the ship. McTee himself, followed by Harrigan and the negro stokers, went down to the fire-room. It was fiery hot there, indeed. When the Scotchman swung down the ladder into the hole it was like a blast from a furnace, and the air was foul with the nauseating odor of the smoldering wheat. The men gasped and struggled for breath, and yet they began to work without complaint.

All hands set to. The fires were shaken down and started afresh; the coal shoveled out from the bunkers. Then a negro collapsed without a cry of warning. They carried him out to the upper air, and brought down two of the sailors to take his place. And the sailors went without a murmur. They were fighting for the one chance in ten thousand, the chance of bringing the ship to shore before the fire burst out in flame which would lick the Heron from one end to the other within an hour.

McTee went up to the bridge to take the bearings and lay the course. By the time his reckonings were completed steam was up; Campbell had remedied the trouble in the engine-room; the propeller began to turn, and a yell went up from the ship and tingled to heaven. When McTee came down from the bridge to the waist, leaving Hovey at the wheel, a dozen of the tars gathered about the new skipper and fairly crushed him in their arms, weeping and shouting, for in their eyes he was the deliverer, it was he who was giving them the fighting chance to live.

And how they fought! There was something awe-inspiring and almost beyond the human in the fury with which they labored. There was not a weakling in that crew. Every man was picked for strength as well as for villainy, it seemed, and with fear to inspire them each man became a Hercules.

It was in the fire-room that their chief difficulty lay. Even in the arctics the fire-room of a large steamer is a veritable furnace, and in the tropics only those who are used to this inferno of heat can endure it for an hour at a time. When to this heat was added that from the hold of the ship, it was truly a miracle that any living thing could exist there.

But Harrigan was in charge. When men wilted and pitched to their faces on the sooty, dusty floor, he trussed them under one arm and bore them up to the air. Then he went back and drove them on again. They were willing enough to endure all that flesh could bear, but had it not been for his presence they would have surrendered the task as impossible. But Harrigan would not wilt. Now and again he had to stumble up to the deck and draw in a few deep lungfuls of air, but he went back to the inferno at once, and the men shouted hoarsely at the sight of him and resumed their labor with hysterical energy.

Before the end of that day, however, with the coast still a full thirty-hour run ahead of them, it became literally impossible to continue longer in the fire-room. But Harrigan would not leave. He had a hose introduced into the hold. The men worked absolutely naked with a stream of water playing on them. Now and again when one of them collapsed Harrigan snatched the fire-bar or the shovel from the hands of the worker and labored furiously until another substitute was found.

The necessity of his presence was amply demonstrated that night. The Irishman was too exhausted to continue another minute, and the negroes helped him to the deck and sluiced buckets of salt water over his great, trembling body. To keep the men at work Campbell went down in the hole. They had to carry him up in half an hour. Then McTee tried his hand. He stood the heat as well as Harrigan, but he could not inspire such daredevil enthusiasm in the men. They missed the raucous, cheery voice of Harrigan; they missed the inspiring sight of that flame-red hair,

standing almost erect upon his head; and they missed above all that peculiar driving force which is the effect of personality—a phrase much used and misused, but for which there is no substitute. In other words, when Harrigan came among them they felt *hope,* and when a man has hope he will work on in the face of death.

And at last McTee came up and begged Harrigan to go back. He went, and found an empty fire-room and dying fires. He ran back to the deck, and at his shout the dead veritably rose to life. Men staggered to their feet to follow him below. The giant negro whom he had attacked to liberate Campbell rose to his hands and knees and followed, creeping like a dog, but working like a man when he reached the fire-room. Every breath of the air in that little hell was like a poison gas; and still they breathed of it and lived. Every man on the ship took his turn. Hovey came down and passed coal; McTee came down and wielded the fire-bar, doing the labor of three men while he could endure.

And the Heron drove on toward the shore. The morning passed; the afternoon wore away. It was a matter of hours now before the shore would be in sight, and McTee spread this news among the crew. He sent little Kamasura and Shida, the cabin-boys, running here and there saying to every man they passed: "Four hours! Four hours! Four hours!" And then: "Three hours! Three hours! Three hours!"

And the crew swallowed whisky neat and returned to the fire-room.

At sunset, dim as a shadow, a thing to be guessed at rather than known, the man on the bridge sighted land. The word spread like lightning. The staggering workers in the fire-room heard and joined the cheer which Harrigan started. Then the catastrophe came.

A torch of red fire licked up the stern of the ship; the flames had eaten their way out to the open air!

It was the quick action of McTee which kept the panic from spreading to the hold of the ship at once and bringing up every one of the workers from the fire-room. He gathered the sailors on deck who had strength enough left to walk, and they made a line and attacked the flames with buckets of water. There was, of course, no possibility of quelling the fire at its source, for by this time the hold of the ship where the wheat was stowed must have been one glowing mass of smoldering matter, only waiting for the touch of the air to break into fierce flame. Yet they were able, for a time, to keep the course of the fire from spreading over the decks of the ship

With this work fairly started, McTee ran back to the forward cabin and upper deck of the Heron and set several men to work with axes, rope, and hammer and nails, to cut and tear down some of the framework, sufficient at least to build enough rafts to maintain the crew in the water. So the three sections of the work went on, the fire-fighting, the life-saving, and the driving of the ship. McTee on deck managed two ends of it; Harrigan in the fire-room handled the most desperate responsibility. It seemed as if these two men by their naked will-power were lifting the lives of the crew away from the touch of death and hurling the ship toward the shore.

And now for an hour, for two hours, that ghastly labor continued. The entire stern of the Heron was now a sheet of flames which spread forward inch by inch and foot by foot in spite of the frantic efforts of McTee's fire-fighters. Several rafts of various capacities were by this time ready on the forward part of the ship, when the last workers staggered up from the fire-room, their skin seared and blistered by the terrific heat to which they had been exposed. Last of all came Harrigan, raving and cursing and imploring the men to return to their work. But he had already drained them of their last ounce of effort. And he staggered up the deck, reeling, and sobbing hoarsely with his sense of failure. Kate Malone ran to him and caught his ponderous arm about her shoulders, and, supporting him in this manner, she pointed out across the waters ahead of the ship. There rose the black shadow of the shore and under it a thin line of white -a mere streak and suggestion of light in the darkness—the breakers!

Now by McTee's direction the rafts were hoisted and dragged over the side of the ship, while one frail line of men remained to struggle against the encroaching flames. They were licking into the waist of the Heron, and the wireless house was a mass of red; White Henshaw was burning at sea, and the prophecy was fulfilled.

There came a grinding clash from the interior of the ship. The fire had reached the engine-room. After that there was no delay. The last of the rafts were hoisted overboard and half a dozen men tumbled into each. When the rest of the crew were overboard, McTee, Kate, and Harrigan, lingering behind by mutual consent, took one raft to themselves. All about them tossed the other rafts, and not one man of all the crowd had thought of the golden treasure which they were abandoning with the Heron. Each might be carrying a few gold pieces, but the wealth of White Henshaw would go back into the sea from which it came.

They had not abandoned the flaming ship too soon. A fresh breeze was sweeping from the ocean onto the shore, and fanned the fires forward. Red tongues licked about the main cabin and darted like reaching hands into the heart of the sky. By these flashes they could make out the struggling rafts where the sailors cheered and yelled in the triumph of their escape. But McTee set about erecting a jury sail.

He wrenched off two strips of board from their raft and across these he and Harrigan affixed their shirts. The same wind which had lashed the fires forward on the Heron now hurried the fugitives toward the shore. They had a serious purpose in outstripping the rest of the rafts, because when the mutineers reached the shore the mood of gratitude which they held for Harrigan and McTee was sure to change, for these two men could submit enough evidence to hang them in any country in the world. Perhaps that was the meaning in the shouts of envy and the appeals to hold back that were showered after them as they urged slowly past the other rafts toward the line of the breakers.

Looking back, the Heron was a belching volcano, which suddenly lifted in the center with the sound of a dozen siege guns in volleyed unison, and a column of fire vaulted high into the heavens. It was like a signal, like an appeal to some unknown power. Before they reached the tossing heart of the breakers the Heron was dwindling and sliding fragment by fragment into the sea.

Through those breakers the last light from the ship helped them, and the wind tugging at their little jury sail aided to drive them on until they could swing off the raft and walk toward the beach, carrying Kate between them. On the safe, dry sands they turned, and as they looked back, standing arm in arm, McTee and Harrigan, with Kate between them, the Heron slid forward into the ocean and quenched her fires with a hiss that was like a far-heard whisper of the sea.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IRISH—SCOTCH—AMERICAN.

MEANWHILE the shouts of the mutineers rang louder and louder as their rafts edged in toward the land, so the three turned again and made directly inland. A hundred yards from the edge of the water they were in a dense jungle such as only exists in a Central American swamp region, but they waded and splashed on, and clambered over rotten stumps, slick with wet moss, and stepped on fragments of wood that crumbled under their feet. And all the time they kept the girl between them, lifting her clear of the noisome water as much as possible. It was foul work and dangerous as well, for those forests abound with poisonous water-snakes and with insects almost as deadly the air is filled.

Several times they halted, panting, and discussed the chances of returning to the beach, down which they probably could wander until they reached some village. The shouting of the mutineers, however, urged them on, and from the sound of the voices there was no doubt that Hovey and his men were combing the marsh for the fugitives. Torches had been made by the

sailors, and behind them, now and then, they caught a glimpse of a winking eye of light. This drove them on, and just when the shouts of the mutineers began to die away the marsh ended as abruptly as it had begun, and they started to climb a slope where the thicket changed to an almost open woods. The rise was not long, for after some hours of weary trudging they reached a road, a graded road, one of those rarities of Central America

Down this they straggled with fallen heads and stumbling feet. They had not spoken for nearly two hours, as though they wished to save even the breath of speech for some trial which might still await them. Kate was half-unconscious with fatigue, and McTee on her left and Harrigan on her right carried most of her weight.

In this manner they came in sight of a light which developed into a low-roofed, broad house with a hospitable veranda stretching about it. They made directly for it, leaving the highway, and traversed a level field until they came to the door. McTee supported Kate while Harrigan knocked. There was silence within the house, and then a whisper, a stir, the padding of a slippered foot, and the door was jerked open. A tall man with a narrow, pointed beard appeared. He held a lantern in one hand and a pistol in the other; for those were troubled times in that republic, with the third president in six months holding office. The light fell full on the haggard face of Kate, and the man started back.

"Enter, my children," he said in Spanish, and tossing his weapon on to a little hall-table, he held out his hand to them.

With a great voice he brought his family and servants about them in a few seconds. They came in slippers and in white linen clothes. To a wide-eyed girl with parted lips and a frightened voice, he gave the care of Kate, and the two went off together. The master of the house himself attended to the needs of Harrigan and McTee.

There were few questions asked. This was a question of dire need, and the Spanish-American loves to show his hospitality. Talking was for the morning. In the mean time his guests would require what? Perhaps sleep? Perhaps a bath first? They answered him with one voice, for they both spoke a little Spanish, picked up in their wanderings. Sleep! So they were brought to a room absurdly large and cool and shown two white beds. On these they flung themselves face downward, heard for a few moments the voices of the family in the near-by rooms, and many a "*Dios! Dios!*" and then they slept.

The next day they woke about noon to find, each of them, a little servant sitting by the bed keeping them cool with a great fan. And there were clothes laid out for them, the immaculate white clothes which the tropics require; and they were led to a high-ceilinged bath-room cool with glazed, white bricks which lined it, where the two servants poured over them bucket after bucket of cold water, and the grime of the voyage and the labors in the fire-room and the mighty weariness of their muscles disappeared little by little in slow degrees. Then a shave, then the white clothes, and they were ready for presentation to Señor José Barrydos y Maria y Leon and his family.

And here was a time of many words indeed, for the *señor* was so burning with curiosity that the fire came up and snapped quickly in his black eyes, and he scarcely composed himself to patience by stroking his beard or by attempting to twist his mustache into a still finer point, a thing which was manifestly impossible. It was McTee who told the story of the wreck, and even with his broken Spanish the tale was so vivid that Señor José was forced to rise and walk up and down the room, seating himself from time to time in various chairs and calling out upon a hundred various saints. In the end it was clear in his eyes that he had to deal with two heroes. As such they could have lived with him as honored guests forever.

Then Kate came into the room with the daughter of the house. She wore a green dress of some light material which fluttered into folds at every move or at any touch of the wind which came fanning it through the window, and the Spaniard straightened up from his chair. The two big men followed suit, staring wide-eyed upon her. It

seemed as if some miracle had been worked in her, for they looked in vain for any traces of the fatigues of the voyage or of her helpless weariness of the night before.

There was a color in her cheeks, that fresh bloom beside which all beautiful things in the world are stale and wearisome, and her eyes were bright and quiet, with no trace of the purple stain which long nervous strain paints on the eyelids. To Señor José Barrydos y Maria y Leon she gave both her hands, and he bowed over them and kissed them both. His courtliness made Harrigan and McTee exchange a glance, perhaps of envy and perhaps of disquiet, for she accepted this profound courtesy with an ease as if she had been accustomed to nothing else all her life.

But what a smile there was for each of them afterward! It left them speechless, so that they glowered upon each other and were glad of the soft flow of Señor José's words as he led them in to the breakfast-table.

And when the meal had progressed a little and some of the edge of the novelty of the situation and story had worn away, the Spaniard said:

"But is it not true? Strange news floats in the air this week."

"What news?" asked Harrigan.

"You have not heard?"

"You forget. Our wireless was out of commission for days."

"True! Then you must learn from me?"

He drew a breath and stiffened in his chair, then with a little gesture of apology and a smile he added: "Why should I hunt for pompous words? I can tell you in one phrase: the world is at war, gentlemen!"

They merely gaped upon him.

"German troops have entered Belgium; France, England, and Russia are at war with Germany and Austria!"

He waited for the astonishment to die away in their eyes.

Kate was shaking her head. "It is impossible," she said. "There may be a disturbance, but the world is past the time of great wars. Men are now too civilized, and—"

Here she stopped, for her eyes fell on the faces of Harrigan and McTee. Civilized? No; she had seen enough to know that civilization strikes no deeper in human nature than clothes go to change the man. The centuries have placed gentler words on the tongue of man, but underneath, in his heart, he is the same mixture of poet and brute.

"Civilized?" Don José had taken her up. "Ah, madam, already wild tales reach us of the Germans in Belgium."

"But there was a treaty," she cried, "and the greatest nations in the world have guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium. Germany herself—"

"True!" said José; "but by crossing Belgium, Germany gets an easy passage into France. Do you see? There was a treaty—yes. But the time has come—*Der Tag*—and the treaty?"

He waved his graceful hands.

"It is because of the violation of Belgian neutrality, among other things, that England has entered the war, it is said."

"Ah-h!" said Harrigan, lapsing suddenly from Spanish into his Irish brogue. "Thrue for ye, man! John Bull will take the Kaiser by the throat. In time of peace, why, to hell with England, say I, like all good Irishmen; but in time av war-r, it's shoulder to shoulder, John Bull an' Paddy, say I, an' we'll lick the wor-r-rld!"

And McTee broke in savagely: "You forget the Scotch. Without the Scotch, England and Ireland—what could they do? Nothing!"

"Could they not?" said Harrigan, with rising temper. "I tell ye, ye black Highlander, that wan Irishman—"

"Hush," said Kate earnestly; for the Spaniard was staring at them in amaze. "It is a world war, and no time for jealousy. England -Scotland—Ireland—and America, too, in time—we will all be fighting for one purpose. And when the last test comes the United States—"

She stopped with a gesture of pride, and Harrigan said with deep feeling: "Aye, they're a hard lot, the Yankees. I know wan tall, lean man, I disremimber his name, he looked like a figure 11, he did, but he was a lovely man with his fists, he was!"

His eyes became tenderly meditative and he caressed his square jaw slowly.

"But as for the Scotch," he went on in a murmur which only McTee could hear · "as for the Scotch, I wouldn't be wipin' my feet on 'em, when it comes to the fight in'. D'ye hear me, McTee?"

"And understand," said McTee, smiling broadly, so that none of the rest might understand, "our time is close at hand, Harrigan. We're on dry land."

"We are—thank God," answered Harrigan, "but play the game, McTee, till the girl is cared for."

"Right," said McTee, "for when we're through maybe neither of us will be able to help her again."

In the mean time Señor José had explained to Kate the nearness of the city—El Ciudad Grande—for she had been asking many urgent questions. The upshot of their conversation was that their host offered to take them immediately into the town, where they could find accommodation at the one hotel—if they refused his further hospitality. So in half an hour Señor José's carriage of state was harnessed and the four journeyed in to El Ciudad Grande.

The "Great City" consisted of a double row of houses—most of them mere shacks, along a single street. Almost the only habitable building from the European's point of view—was the hotel, which towered over the other structures. Before this building they halted, and Señor José went with them to explain to the hotel owner that these were his guests—his dear friends—his friends of many years' standing in fact, his relatives in close blood. In short, he recommended the party to the special care of the hotel-keeper. Business called the hospitable Spaniard away. He refused to accept any consideration for the clothes which he had donated to the party, and McTee jingled a handful of Henshaw's gold in vain. Señor José must depart, but he would return the next day. So the three stood alone together at last. Harrigan was the first to speak.

"I've an engagement. I'm afther havin' some important business on hand, Kate, colleen, so I'll be steppin' out."

And he turned to go.

"Wait," she called, and brought him back with the serious steadiness of her voice. "Your business means trouble. I know what your engagements are when the Irish comes so thick on your tongue, Dan. You were about to have an engagement also, Angus?"

McTee looked at her, strove to speak, and then glowered on Harrigan for having so clumsily betrayed them.

"You are like children," she said softly, "and you let me read your minds."

She bowed her head in long thought.

Then: "Didn't we pass the sign of the British consul down the street over that little building?"

"Yes," said McTee, wondering, and again she was lost in thought.

Then she raised her head and stepped close to them with that smile, half whimsical and half sad, which they were beginning to know. They had seen it a hundred times when she watched them standing together.

"I'm going to ask you to let me be alone for a time—for a long time. It will be sunset in five hours. Will you let me have that long to do some hard thinking? And will you promise me during that time that you will not fly at each other's throats the moment you are out of my sight?"

Harrigan swallowed hard and looked away.

"Promises," he said at last, "come thick in my throat—like thirst."

"Will you promise?" she insisted. "For what I will have to say at sunset I know will make a great deal of difference in your attitude to each other."

"I'll promise," said Harrigan suddenly. "I've waited so long I can stand five hours more."

"I'll promise," said McTee; but he scowled upon the floor.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BURNING OF THE SACRIFICE.

THEY left her and walked from the hotel. At the door Harrigan turned fiercely upon the Scotchman.

"Do what ye please for the five hours,

McTee, but give me the room I need for breathin'. D'ye hear? Otherwise I'll be forgettin' me promises."

"Do I hear ye?" answered McTee, snarling. "Aye, growl while you may. I'll stop that throat of yours for good—tonight."

He turned on his heel, and the two men separated. Harrigan struck with a long swing out over a road which led into the rolling fields near the little town. He walked rapidly, and his thoughts kept pace, for he was counting his chances to win Kate as a miser counts his hoard of gold, weighing each piece ten times on the tip of his wise forefinger. Two pictures weighed large in his mind. One was of Kate at ease in the home of the Spaniard. Such ease would never be his; she came from another social world—a higher sphere. The second picture was of McTee climbing down from the wireless house and calmly assuming command of the mutineers in the crisis. Such a maneuver would never have occurred to the Irishman, and it was only through that maneuver that the ship had been brought to shore, for nothing save the iron will of McTee could have directed the mutineers.

When the sun hung low he turned and strode back toward the village, and despair trailed him like his shadow. He began to see clearly now what he had always feared. She loved McTee—McTee, who spoke clear, pure English, when he chose, and who could talk of many things. She loved McTee, but she dared not avow that love for fear of infuriating Harrigan and thereby risking the life of the Scotchman. It grew plainer and plainer. With the thought of Kate came another, far different, and yet blending one with another. When he reached the village it was still a short time before sunset. He went straight to the British consulate and entered, for he had reached the solution of his puzzle.

"My name's Harrigan," he said to the little man with the side-burns and the studious eyes, "and I've come to know if the old country has sent for volunteers. I want to go over."

"The old country," said the consul, "has called for volunteers, and together with some of the British citizens in this country I have discovered a means of sending our boys across the water; but"—and here he examined Harrigan shrewdly—"but it's an easy thing to take an Irish name. How am I to know you're not a German, my friend. I've never seen you before."

Harrigan swelled.

"A German? Me?" he muttered, and then getting his breath his head tilted back: "Ye little wan-eyed, lantern-jawed, flat-headed block, is it me—is it Harrigan ye call a German? Shtep out from behind the desk an' let me see av you're a man!"

The consul removed his glasses and wiped them carefully. Strangely enough, he did not seem irritated by this outburst. He was, in fact, smiling. Then his hand went out to the Irishman.

"Mr. Harrigan," he said, "I'm honored by knowing you."

Harrigan stared and accepted the hand with caution; there was still battle in his eyes.

"And can you send me over?" he asked doubtfully.

"I can. As I said before, we've raised a small fund for just this purpose."

He drew out a piece of paper and commenced taking down the particulars of Harrigan's name and birth and other details. Then a short typewritten note signed by the consul ended the interview. He gave Harrigan directions about how he could reach a shipping agent on the eastern coast, handed over the note, and the Irishman stepped out of the little office already on his way to the world war. He took no pleasure in his resolution, but wandered slowly back toward the hotel with downward head. He would speak a curt farewell and step out of the lives of the two. It would be very simple unless McTee showed some exultation, but if he did— Here Harrigan refused to think further. He merely shrugged his shoulders, blinked his eyes, and hurried on to the hotel to get the ugly business over as soon as possible.

It was well after sunset when he crossed the veranda, and at the door he found McTee striding slowly up and down with ponderous and regular footfall.

"Harrigan," said McTee.

"Well?" growled Harrigan.

"Stand over here close to me, and keep your face shut while I'm speaking. It won't take me long."

The words were insulting enough, but the voice which spoke them was sadly subdued, and Harrigan obeyed, wondering.

"Listen," said McTee. "What I've got to say is harder for me to do than anything I've ever done in my life. So don't make me repeat anything. What I say goes, and I mean every word. Harrigan, I've tried to beat you by fair means or foul ever since we met—ever since you saved my hide in the Iviliei district of Honolulu. I've tried to get you down, and I've failed. I fought you "—here he ground his teeth in agony – "and you beat me."

"It was the bucking of the deck that beat you," put in Harrigan, overawed by something in the Scotchman's voice and manner of talk.

"Damn you, shut up till I'm through or I'll wring your neck and break your back! I've failed to down you, Harrigan. You've come out on top every time we've met. You beat me on the Mary Rogers. You made a fool of me on the island. And on the Heron –"

He paused again, breathing hard.

"On the Heron, it was you who brought us food and water when we were dying. And afterward, when Henshaw died, I jumped out before the mutineers and took command of them because I thought I could win back in Kate's mind any ground which I'd lost before. I paraded the deck before her eyes; I gave commands; I was the man of the hour, I was driving the Heron to the shore in spite of the fire."

"You were," admitted Harrigan sadly. "It was a great work you did, McTee. It was that which won her—"

"But even when I was in command you proved yourself the better man, Harrigan."

The Irishman leaned back against the wall, gasping, weak with astonishment.

McTee went on: "I paraded the deck; I made a play to make her admire me, and for a while I succeeded, until the time came when you were carried up to the deck too weak to keep the men at work in the fire-room. Ah, Harrigan, that was a great moment to me. I said to Kate: 'Harrigan has done well, but of course he can't control men—his mind is too simple.'"

"Did you say that?" murmured Harrigan, and hatred made his voice soft, almost reverent.

"I did, and I went on: 'I suppose I'll have to go down there and drive the lads back to their work.' So down I went, but you know what happened, damn you! They wouldn't work for me. They stood around looking stupid at me and left me alone in the fire-room, and I had to come back on deck, in the sight of Kate, and rouse you out of your sleep and beg you to go back and try to make the lads keep at their work. And you got up to your knees, struggling to get back your consciousness! And you staggered to your feet, and you called to the firemen who lay senseless and sick on the deck around you—sick for sleep—and when they heard you call, they got up, groaning, and they reeled after you back to their work in the fire-room, and some of them dragged themselves along on their hands and knees. Oh, God!"

He struck his clenched fist across his eyes.

"And all the time I was watching the awe and the wonder come up like a fire in the eyes of Kate, while she looked after you. And when the engines started humming again I saw her cant her head to one side, and I knew she was thinking of you."

Harrigan watched him with the same stupid amazement.

"Harrigan," said McTee at last, "you've won her. When I walked out by myself to-day I saw it all clearly for the first time. I saw that I was the only obstacle between her and her happiness. She doesn't dare tell you she loves you, for fear that I'll try to kill you. So I've decided to step out from between—I *have* stepped out! I'm going back to Scotland and get into the war. If I have fighting enough I can forget the girl, maybe, and you—damn your soul! I've talked to the British consul already, and he's given me a note that will take me over the water. So, Harrigan, I've merely come to say good-by to you—and you can say good-by for me to Kate."

"Wait," said Harrigan. "There are a good many kinds of fools, but a Scotch fool is the worst of all. Take that paper out of your pocket and tear it up. Ah-h, McTee, ye blind man! Can't ye see that gir-rl's been eatin' out her hear-rt for the love av ye, damn your eyes? Can't ye see that the only thing that keeps her from throwin' her ar-rms around your neck is the fear of Harrigan? Look!"

He pulled out the note which the consul had given him.

"I've got the same thing you have. I'm going to go over the water. I tell you, I've seen her eyes whin she looked at ye, McTee, an' that's how I know she loves ye. Tear up your paper! A blight on ye! May ye have long life and make the girl happy—an' rot in hell after!"

"By God," said McTee, "we've both been thinking the same thing at the same time. And maybe we're both wrong. Kate said she had something to say to us. Let's see her first and hear her speak."

"It 'll break my heart to hear her confess she loves ye, McTee—but I'll go!"

They went to the sleepy clerk behind the desk and asked him to send up word to Miss Malone that they wished to see her.

"Ah, Miss Malone," said the clerk, nodding, "before she left—"

"Left?" echoed the two giants in voices of thunder.

"She gave me this note to deliver to you."

And he passed them the envelope. Each of them placed a hand upon it and stared stupidly at the other.

"Open it!" said Harrigan hoarsely.

"I'm troubled with my old failing—a weakness of the eyes," said McTee. "Open it yourself."

Harrigan opened it at last and drew out the paper within. They stood under a light, shoulder to shoulder, and read with difficulty, for the hand of Harrigan which held the paper shook.

DEAR LADS, DEAR DAN AND ANGUS:

As soon as you left me I went to the British consul, and from him I learned the shortest way of cutting across country to the railroad. By the time you read this I am on the train and speeding north to the States.

I have known for a long time that the only thing which keeps you from being fast friends is the love which each of you says he has for me. So I have decided to step from between you, for there is nothing on earth so glorious as the deep friendship of one strong man for another.

I fear you may try to follow me, but I warn you that it would be useless. I have taken a course of training, and I am qualified as a nurse. The Red Cross of America will soon be sending units across the water to care for the wounded of the Allies. I shall go with one of the first units. You might be able to trace me to the States, but you will never be able to trace me overseas. This is good-by.

It is hard to say it in writing. I want to take your hands and tell you how much you mean to me. But I could not wait to do that. For your own sakes I have to flee from you both.

Now that I have said good-by it is easier to add another thing. I care for both of you more than for any man I have ever known, but one of you I love with all my soul. Even now I dare not say which, for it might make enmity and jealousy between you, and enmity between such men as you means only one thing—death.

I have tried to find courage to stand before you and say which of you I love, but I cannot. At the last moment I grow weak at the thought of the battle which would follow. My only resort is to resign him I care for beyond all friends, and him I love beyond all other men. It is not easy, but the woman's way is always the hard way. You two can mold your destiny with the strength of your hands, but a woman's only power is to love, and to give up what she loves.

I know that when I am gone you will become fast friends, and together you will be kings of men. And in time—for a man's life is filled with actions which rubs out all memories—you will forget that you loved me, I know; but perhaps you will not forget that because I resigned you both, I built a foundation of rock for your friendship.

You will be happy, you will be strong, you will be true to one another. And for that I am glad. But to you whom I love: Oh, my dear, it is breaking my heart to leave you!

KATE.

One hand of each was on the paper as they lowered it and stared into each other's faces, with a black doubt, and a wild hope. Then of one accord they raised the paper and read it through again.

"And to think," muttered Harrigan at last, "that I should have ruined her hap-

piness. I could tear my heart out, McTee!"

"Harrigan," said the big Scotchman solemnly, "it is you she means. See! She cried over the paper while she was writing. No woman could weep for Black McTee!"

"And no woman could write like that to Harrigan. Angus, you can keep the knowledge that she loves you, but let me keep the letter. Ah-h, McTee, I'll be afther keepin' it forninst me heart!"

"Let's go outside," said McTee. "There is no air in this room."

They went out into the black night, and as they walked each kept his hand upon the letter, so that it seemed to be a power which tied them together.

"Angus," said Harrigan after a time, "we'll be fightin' for the letter soon. Why should we? I know every line of it by heart."

"I know every word," answered McTee

"I've a thought," said Harrigan. "In the ould days, whin a great man died, they used to burn his body. An' now I'm feelin' as if somethin' had died in me—the hope av winnin' Kate, McTee. So let's burn her letter between us, eh?"

"Harrigan," said McTee with heartfelt emotion, "that thought is well worthy of you!"

They knelt on the little spot. They placed the paper between them. Each scratched a match and lighted one side of the paper; the flames rose and met in the middle of the letter. Yet they did not watch the progress of the fire; by the sudden flare of light they gazed steadily into each other's face, straining their eyes as the light died away as though each had discovered in the other something new and strange. When they looked down the paper was merely a dim, red glow which passed away as quickly as a flush dies from the face, and the wind carried away the frail ashes. Then they rose and walked shoulder to shoulder on and into the night.

(The end.)

GOOD NEWS FOR SOLDIER-RAILS.

A BURNING question among railroad men has been the status of railroad men now in military service after the war is over. Some fear has been felt among the men that, after having served their country in war, when they returned and sought their old jobs, they would find their status the same as that of employees just entering the service.

All good railroad men will be glad to learn, however, that no such injustice is to be practised, as the following order issued on November 1 by Director-General McAdoo clearly establishes their status.

These men will not only get their old jobs back—when they are not physically incapacitated for filling them—but their status as to seniority will be precisely the same as it was when they left railroad service to enter military service. The individual managements of the majority of the Federal roads, however, had already announced their intention to preserve the seniority rights of their former employees, and also to give preference, so far as possible, to returned soldiers or sailors in the matter of employment.

The director-general's order is as follows:

"1. In order that as nearly as practicable there shall be a uniform treatment of this matter, the following general principles will govern:

"*a*. In the case of an employee having established seniority rights, so far as practicable, and where the employee is physically qualified, he will be restored to such seniority rights.

"*b*. In the case of employees who do not have seniority rights under existing practises, a consistent effort will be made to provide employment for them when mustered out of military service.

"2. Upon railroads where the assurances given on this subject have been more specific than the provisions of paragraph 1 hereof, such assurances shall be observed."

McCLOSKEY BENDS A RAIL.

BY CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS.

The New Brakie Demonstrates How to Throw a Switch Under the Bully of the Train-Crew.

"PRETTY Maggie Mooney is the real, real thing."

So ran the old song; and so she was, only her name was not Maggie. It was Molly.

Molly Mooney stood in the doorway of the coal-dock telegraph-office that bright summer morning. Jumbo Dart stood just outside the door. Behind him the crew of the yard engine was grouped: Dolan, the conductor; Braden, the engineer; Taggart, the fireman; and O'Toole and me, switchmen. Jumbo was the other switchman.

That was long ago, nearly thirty years; but I can see that bunch yet. Jumbo stood silent, his head up and his little eyes flaring like an angry pig's. Molly's eyes flared, too. But it was with honest anger. She was giving Jumbo a well-deserved tongue-lashing.

We were for her, to the last man of us. None of us was Jumbo's physical equal, and—whisper it—we were all a little afraid of him. We were mighty glad to see him lashed, even if it was only with words.

"You call yourself a man!" Molly cried. "You're a brute. If I were a man I'd give you such a beating as you'd remember to the day of your death. The idea of your striking a boy like my brother! He doesn't weigh within a hundred pounds of what you weigh."

"I didn't strike him," Jumbo mumbled. "I only give him a little smack side of the face. He was sassy to me."

"You knocked him down," Molly said.

"I guess I ain't got a gentle smack in my system," Jumbo said with a satisfied grin.

"Some day you'll meet a man that 'll treat you the way you treat other, weaker men," says Molly. "You can't go on bullying everybody for always."

"Mebbe," Jumbo comes back. "But I ain't never met up with that kind of a feller yet. When I meet him I'll be right there to do my part."

"You just wait," Molly said; and then, having had the last word, she run into the telegraph-office, slamming the door behind her.

We went back to the engine, which had been panting in front of the office like it felt the heat even as we did. Any one of us would have given his good right mitt if he could have waltzed up to Jumbo and offered him mortal combat. We all liked Molly first rate—just about as much as we didn't like Jumbo.

But what are you going to do when a guy stacks up about six feet, has arms like a gorilla, and a fist like a cannon ball? When a man can put another man down with a slap it's a good idea to hesitate and consider before jumping his frame.

What had stirred Molly up had happened the day before. Molly was the day operator at the dock, and her brother was the night operator. That's all there was to it in those days—twelve hours on and twelve hours off.

Coming to work the day before to relieve Molly, Jimmy Mooney had met Jumbo at the bottom of the dock incline. Jumbo had flung one of his usual nasty remarks at the kid, and the kid had come back at him, being spunky like his sister. One word had followed another, the kid holding his ground. Then Jumbo had slapped Jimmy, and Jimmy had gone to his knees

"You little dude!" Jumbo had screeched.

"Monkey with me any more, and you'll get worse 'n that."

We had skidded down to the yard office before Molly had got a chance at Jumbo. But she had been laying for him this morning, and had spoken her piece.

All through that day I could see the men sizing up Jumbo, and I knew that every last one of them was wondering if there would be any chance to put a kayo wallop on him accidentally. The answer to that was a sigh heaved out of their manly chests. They knew there was no more chance than there was chance that we'd all and sundry be working on the varnished cars before the next new moon.

We started for the yards that afternoon without any more excitement. Half-way there we had to go in on a house-track at the brick works to take out a drag. We coupled up to the cars. O'Toole, as the engine neared him, stood in the middle of the track. When the engine was just in front of him he put up a foot to step on board. He slipped somehow.

In five minutes the engine, without that drag of cars of brick, was hustling to the yard office. An ambulance came and bore O'Toole to a hospital. His right foot was hurt badly.

Dolan went into the yard office, wiping sweat from his broad face. Dolan liked O'Toole. It was pretty tough for a nice, young lad to get it that way.

The accident to O'Toole left us short a man. Next morning, when we went to work, a new man was waiting for us. He was not only new; he was green. Had never done a stroke of railroading before. Dolan looked him over, to figure out how much trouble he would cause. A green man is more trouble than help to a conductor at first.

This lad weighed maybe a hundred and fifty pounds. He was about five feet eight inches from the ground upward. Dolan pulled a long face and turned the lad over to me, to make sure I would watch him and not let him fall under the wheels before we got in that night.

Coming to work, I had been thinking of Molly Mooney and Jumbo Dart. I knew, of course, we would have a new man coming on the job to take O'Toole's place, and I had been wishing he would stack up about like John Sullivan. He didn't, as you see.

"I hoped you'd weigh a ton and stand fourteen feet in your socks," I said to him.

"And why?" said McCloskey, the new man; and his voice was as soft and polite as Molly's when Molly wasn't mad about anything.

"You see that big man on the running-board?" I said.

"I see him," McCloskey said.

"That's Jumbo Dart." I told him. "He's a bruiser and a bully. Every time a new man comes to these parts I'm hoping it will be somebody that can lick Jumbo. But I guess such a man will never show up. All *you* can do is to be polite to him and keep out of his way. Don't cross him, whatever you do. He's mighty powerful, and not particular whether he hurts a man or not."

"He'll not have any trouble with me," McCloskey said. "I wouldn't fight any man for a thousand dollars."

"I guess you won't fight Jumbo," I said. "It's too cussed bad that somebody can't bend an iron for him unexpected and send him into a blind siding to stay there."

McCloskey had been sizing Jumbo up with his bright, young eye.

"He doesn't look like he had any brains to spare," McCloskey said. "If none of you can lick him, why don't you use your brains? I should think you could hit on a plan for handing him a lemon of some kind."

"Gee!" I said. "I never thought of that. It's a good idea. I'll pass the tip along. You keep your noodle working. If you think of anything, you let me know."

"I will," McCloskey said; "but I'm not looking for any trouble. I just want to mind my own business."

"This Jumbo matter is everybody's business," I said

"I'll think about it," McCloskey said, and he smiled.

He didn't get very far with that minding-his-own-business stunt—just as far as the dock office, to be exact. When he got down there, Dolan went inside for a minute to

ask Molly something. McCloskey rubbered through the office window. Their eyes met.

"Ah-ha!" says I to myself sharp and sudden.

For Molly Mooney had blushed. She wasn't one of these ready blushers, either. There was nothing of the silly, giggling, flirting girl about Molly. Usually she was all business.

But McCloskey was such a good humored kind of a guy himself that she couldn't have got mad at his once-over if she had wanted to. And I guess she didn't want to very hard. I could see that McCloskey was voting unanimously with himself in favor of the red-haired, red-cheeked telegraph operator at the dock.

Then Molly's eyes dropped to her key. Score one for McCloskey. Molly didn't generally drop her eyes for anybody. McCloskey at the same minute felt a hand on his shoulder.

He turned and looked up into Jumbo's red-rimmed eyes.

"Startin' in early, ain't you?" Jumbo asked.

"Early on what?" McCloskey says.

"Makin' eyes at that little girl in there," says Jumbo. "You want to leave her alone. She's my girl. Mine, do you hear?"

That was news from the front to me. I hadn't known that big bear had his eyes on Molly. I saw that what McCloskey had said about his brains was true. Slapping her brother was a queer way to go about making a hit with her.

"I hear," says McCloskey very soft.

"You keep away from her, or I'll slap your face," says Jumbo.

"This," says I to myself, "is a good place for McCloskey to get in his fine work. I wonder if he can think of something real quick?"

"Yes, sir," says McCloskey.

"Well," I says to myself again, "if that is some of his fine work, I don't want any of it"

Jumbo stood staring at him. "Yes, sir," was about the extreme limit.

I guess Jumbo finally figured out that McCloskey wouldn't be worth slapping. Anybody that 'd say "Yes, sir," when a bluff was hung on him was too soft to bother about.

Jumbo lifted his big shoulders and let 'em fall, and turned around and walked away.

That noon the engine lay before the dock while we ate our dinners. Afterward, Dolan rose to go into the telegraph-office. McCloskey got up, too, and followed him. I took a look at Jumbo, and sneaked along. Trouble was brewing. I wanted to be in — but not too far.

"Who is that little girl?" McCloskey says.

"The operator?" I says. "That's Molly Mooney no relation to Maggie, but the same kind. She's the sister of the man Jumbo knocked down with a slap."

"Introduce me?" McCloskey asked.

The last sad rites were for him, not for me.

"I sure will," I said. "But you want to look out for Jumbo. You heard what he said."

"Never mind," said McCloskey low and easy.

After Dolan had got through with his business, I introduced Molly and McCloskey. McCloskey mentioned the weather, and Molly said, "Yes, that's so." Nothing more for a minute, and then Molly busts out:

"Why don't they send a man here some time that's big enough to make that brute Dart behave? Is he the champion fighter of the world, I wonder? All the men seem to be afraid of him."

McCloskey give her a look out of his clear, blue eyes. They was not so clear as they had been. A little cloud of what you might call regret came into them.

"It's too bad somebody can't tame him," McCloskey said. "I heard about your brother and him. That was a shame."

All I want is sympathe-e!

"Yes, it was a shame," said Molly. "But don't you mix up with him, Mr. McCloskey. He would hurt you. He's a very strong man. Just be polite to him and keep away from him."

"Yes, that's what I'd better do," McCloskey said.

"I wouldn't want him to hurt you,"

Molly added; and then she blushed right up to the roots of her hair.

"Well," said McCloskey, losing no time that I could see, "I'll come in and see you again if you'll let me."

"Why, yes, any time," said Molly.

I trailed McCloskey back to the engine. Jumbo stepped down from the gangway. The rest of the crew edged up behind Jumbo.

"Well, well!" Jumbo drawled. "Seems like you're a very swift lad when it comes to getting hep to the ladies. Didn't I tell you she was my girl?"

I looked at McCloskey. I figured he was in mighty bad. I was sorry, for I kind of liked him. A man would be apt to like anybody that Molly Mooney liked.

I wondered what McCloskey would say. I had lost faith in him being able to pull off any clever stunt that would make Jumbo fade away. Jumbo had the punch, and that's what counted in those days.

"You said she was, but I don't believe it," said McCloskey as solemn as a last year's bird's nest.

Jumbo stared down at him. He gasped, his lower lips hanging down. I expected to see him smash McCloskey between the eyes.

"Why, you, you—" he spluttered. "You call me a liar?"

Then he stuck out one big, hairy paw and clutched McCloskey by the shoulder. He flung McCloskey down and rubbed McCloskey's face in the cinders.

"There," he said, standing back, "how do you like that?"

McCloskey got up. Except for the black specks the cinders made, his face was as white as chalk. His eyes were on fire, and his lips curled back from his teeth. He was usually so good-natured-looking that the change was amazing. If he could have made that change on the stage, I bet they'd have called him some actor.

"If you ever lay a hand on me again, Dart, I'll almost kill you," McCloskey busts out. "Mebbe I will kill you."

Jumbo started to laugh. Then he looked into McCloskey's eyes. The hand he had been raising fell to his side. I guess he had never seen a look in a man's eyes like the look in McCloskey's now.

"Yes, you will," he said with a sneer.

"You heard what I said," McCloskey snorted. "Don't you ever lay a hand on me, and don't you ever call that girl your girl again—ever."

Jumbo stared at him a minute longer, and then he backed away.

One of the boys laughed. Jumbo had a flash of rage, and took a step back toward McCloskey, but McCloskey stood his ground. Jumbo turned around and went to the other side of the engine.

I followed him. Wow! This was all to the good. I didn't know whether that was what McCloskey had had in mind or not, but it had worked, though it looked to me like a plain bluff.

"Well, old-timer," I addressed Mr. Dart, "he kind of sprung a flag on you sudden, didn't he? Look out he doesn't put you into clear. That guy has got murder in his system."

I didn't know whether Jumbo would get mad or not. Maybe he would jump little me. But he didn't.

"Hawkins," he says, "did you ever meet that runt before?"

"Never set eyes on him till this fair and gladsome morn," I said. "Why?"

"Because he's one of them N' York gunmen that you read about," Jumbo says. "Or else he's one of them toughs from out West. Anyways, he don't fight fair. He didn't bluff me none, but if I'd made a move he'd have drawed his gun and fired from the hip."

"For the love of Mike," I says, "what five-cent novel did you get that from? You've never been west of Chi or east of Buffalo."

"All the same I c'n spot a man that packs a gun on his hip," Jumbo said. "But you wait. I'll get him. I'll get him right enough."

Mebbe it was a shame to tip McCloskey's hand, but I couldn't help ragging Jumbo while I had the nerve.

"He isn't backing his play with a gun," I said. "It's brains he's counting on. He told me. I think maybe he's a hypnotist."

"What's that?" Jumbo says. "One of them guys that puts you to sleep by makin' a few passes before your eyes?"

"One and the same," I said.

"No, that ain't it," Jumbo said. "I seen murder in his eyes. He packs a gun. But you wait."

I could see that Jumbo spent a most unpleasant afternoon. There was a new look in the boys' eyes as they watched him. He couldn't help but see that they felt he had had one put over on him.

And Jumbo himself grew almost thoughtful. It was a big effort, and must have fatigued him, but he went around with his eyes cast down and his lips moving like he was saying a prayer.

Along toward evening he sidles up to me.

"You don't think that guy packs a gun?" he says.

"I know he doesn't," I said, kidding him. "A bit ago I was standing near him, and I felt of both his hip-pockets, and there was nothing in them not even a package of chewing."

Jumbo's face cleared up.

"You really think he's trying hypnotism on me?" he says.

"I don't know what it is," I answered. "But he's using his brains."

"I'm afraid of no man's brains," Jumbo said. "Brains can't harm you. I got a plan. You watch my smoke this evening."

I tipped this off to the gang, and Dolan kept us hanging around till Molly's brother came on duty and Molly was through for the day. Jumbo followed the kid into the office. We edged up to the open window. Jumbo glanced over his shoulder and saw us all there, including McCloskey.

"Hello, little girl," says Jumbo. "How's my little girl?"

Molly give him a look that should have struck him dead.

"Don't you dare to speak to me like that," she said.

"Now, now," says Jumbo, "don't be cross. There's a nice little girl."

"You'd better go home, Molly," her brother said. "To-morrow I'll buy a gun and kill this brute."

"No, no," Molly cries. "You mustn't do that. I'll go. You lock the door, and he won't bother you."

Molly stepped into the outer room. Jumbo stood up from the window on whose ledge he had been leaning. He followed her to the door and stepped out after her.

I looked at McCloskey. McCloskey looked up and took off his cap as Molly went by him. The girl gave him kind of a pleading look. McCloskey's look was what you might call non-committal. For all he showed he might just as well have worn a mask

Jumbo kept at Molly's heels till she passed the engine, and then took step with her and walked a dozen yards. The girl said something McCloskey couldn't hear. Jumbo stopped and took off his cap like McCloskey had done. Then he walked back to us, that maddening grin of his on his thick lips.

"Too bad I can't see my girl all the way home," he says.

He looked at McCloskey. The burning light was in McCloskey's eyes again and his lips was writhing. His face had about as much blood in it as a smoke-stack has.

He gave a shudder and a couple of shivers, and his two fists went into hard knots. Some brain work, I'll say.

"I said I wouldn't do it," he kind of gasped. "I shouldn't do it. But I can't stand this." He turned on Jumbo and panted out: "Will you just step across the tracks where we'll have room?"

"Room?" Jumbo repeats. "Room for what?"

"I'm going to lick you within an inch of your life," says McCloskey.

It was the first time I ever see Jumbo hesitate when a man talked like that. I guess he was thinking of that gun-play guff he had been speaking about.

"You goin' to drill a hole in me?" he asks.

"I'm goin' to beat you to a pulp with my fists," McCloskey comes back. "Come along."

He went around the engine and stepped over on the hard, wide cinder path that run alongside of the dock's incline. Jumbo followed him, shakin' his big head slow and puzzled.

They faced each other in the dim light of the early evening. The crew grouped itself about them, far enough away to give 'em plenty of room. The men's eyes were

hanging out around their cheek-bones, so to say. The dope was too mysterious for them.

"Put up your hands," McCloskey orders

"Oh," says Jumbo, and he heaved a sigh that was a near relative to an engine's exhaust.

It had come to Jumbo that McCloskey planned a straight fight. Well, that ought to have been easy for Jumbo. He ought to have been able to put McCloskey away with one punch.

McCloskey takes a nimble-footed spring toward Jumbo. Jumbo bangs out at him, but McCloskey is not there. Then bang-bang. McCloskey smashes Jumbo right on his mouth with his right and left fists. The blows drew blood.

McCloskey was like a flash of light now. He darted in and darted out. Jumbo smashed at him with all his strength, but the blow didn't connect by a foot. Then I'll be hanged if McCloskey didn't hit Jumbo four times on the mouth while Jumbo was trying to get his balance.

Jumbo let out a bellow that would have made a wild bull jealous. He reached for McCloskey, but he couldn't get his hands onto him. McCloskey was hither and yon all at the same time. All the while his fists beat a tattoo on Jumbo's face. Jumbo was a sight, and he was struggling to get his breath.

Then all of a sudden McCloskey hit Jumbo on the point of the jaw. Jumbo give a "woof" and fell back. I see McCloskey plant himself on his two feet after he had hopped close to Jumbo. His right fist went down and back. Then it went forward and up. Jumbo went to the cinders, and he didn't get up.

We crowded up to McCloskey, while McCloskey stood staring down at Jumbo.

"You've hurt him bad, son," says Dolan.

McCloskey sucked in a long, tremblin' breath. Then down he goes beside Jumbo, his hand searching for Jumbo's heart-beat. In a minute he lifted his face, and it was white and scared.

"Help me to get him into the office," says McCloskey. "I'm afraid I killed him."

We took Jumbo up and carried him into the outer room of the telegraph-office. We put him down on a bench.

"Hadn't we better get a doctor?" McCloskey whispers.

Dolan had been bending over Jumbo, his fingers on Jumbo's wrist. He looked up with a grin.

"He doesn't need a doctor," he said. "His pulse is going all right, and he is breathing even. Say, where did you learn to fight, kid?"

McCloskey didn't answer. He walked over to the window and leaned his face against it. I could see him giving them shudders and shivers again, like he was having a first-class chill.

In five minutes Jumbo opened his eyes. He blinked for a minute, and then he threw his hands up before his face.

"Don't you hit me again," he says.

We all snickered, except McCloskey. McCloskey turned from the window and walked over to Jumbo.

"I'm sorry I hit you so hard, old man," McCloskey says.

Jumbo sat up and slid his feet to the floor. He studied McCloskey's face for a minute, and then, shaking his head in sorrow, he got to his feet and tottered out to take the evening air.

Jumbo was meek and quiet next day. He didn't speak to McCloskey, but every once in a while I saw him stand and stare at McCloskey, shaking his head as he had shaken it the evening before.

That noon, when McCloskey had eaten his dinner, he went down the track to the telegraph-office and drifted inside. Every day after that he visited Molly; some days he visited her twice. One Saturday evening he flagged me.

"Eh—ah—" he says.

"Yes," I says, "I know it, and I'd be sorry for you if it was anybody but Molly. When is the interesting ceremony to be performed?"

"Next month," he says, "and I merely wished to give you the first invite."

"I'm not very strong on social doings as a rule," I said. "Usually I would just as soon go to a man's funeral as his wedding. But in this case I feel I owe you

something for what you recently did to Jumbo.

"Now that you're to be happy ever afterward, maybe you'll loosen up enough to tell me why you didn't lick Jumbo the day he shoved your map down into the cinders. Seems to me I would be more provoked by a thing like that than by a man's merely walking down a railroad track with a girl, even if I had got so fuddled about her that I thought she was the only female that ever wore a skirt. I've said considerable. You shoot."

From his hip-pocket McCloskey drew his trusty wallet. From the wallet he fingered a newspaper clipping.

"Read that," he says. I read as follows:

> The Kid Lyon—Danny Hale lightweight bout came to an unexpected end last night in the first round. Hale had been taunting Lyon for a moment, and had seemed to have an edge on what fighting there was. Then Lyon lost his temper, as he usually does if things go against him. He hooked a right to Hale's jaw. It was probably the most terrific blow ever delivered by a lightweight. Hale's seconds carried him to his dressing-room. He was unconscious, and the doctors did not revive him for more than half an hour.
>
> Meantime, Lyon paced up and down outside the room in which the doctors worked over Hale. One report had it that Hale was dead. Lyon went all to pieces. He tore his gloves from his hand, dashed them to the floor, and swore he would never fight again.
>
> "I will never strike another man as long as I live," Lyon declared.
>
> When Hale was pronounced out of danger Lyon said he would keep his word. He said he was through with the ring forever.

I folded up the paper and handed it back to McCloskey.

"Pleased to meetcha, kid," I said, feeling quite sporty as I did it.

"McCloskey's my real name," he said.

"Say," I says, "would there be any chance for you to teach me that right hook? I know several guys that—"

"Oh, no," he says. "Nothing like that—nothing at all."

And he jumps up hasty and walks away.

He made me so weary I went immediate to see Molly.

"Say," I says, "do you know who this guy McCloskey is? He's a prize-fighter. He's got it in him to be champion of the world, if he'd just keep on going. It 'd be easy money. In a year he could afford to buy you a team and a big, black coupé."

"He's not a prize-fighter," said Molly. "He's a railroad man, and he's going to be a good one. I wouldn't marry a prize-fighter."

"He fought Jumbo Dart," I said, "and he broke his word to do it. That was a prize-fight, with you for the prize."

She said nothing more at all. Only her eyes got kind of soft and dreamy. I pulled my freight from there at once. I knew if I stayed she'd begin to hand me a lot of soft, female talk that is not good for a man.

Well, McCloskey never became lightweight champion, as he easily might have been if he had not got so sloppy in his feelings. The best he ever did was to wear the brass buttons on the varnished cars and to bring up a family of two sons and one daughter, and all through it to be as foolish about pretty Molly as he was the day he first set eyes on her.

Think of a man settling down to his own fireside like that when he packed that awful punch in his mitt! Why couldn't he have made *me* a Christmas present of that wallop? I've needed it lots.

IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN IN LOVE

You can't afford to miss WILL MacMAHON'S AUSTIN IRBY story in next week's RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE—

PUPPY LOVE AND ORANGE PEEL

It's as good as the earlier stories of the series

NEED WE SAY MORE?

BOOMER JONES—YARDMASTER.

BY J. W. EARP.

Usually the Boomer Had a Corner on the Lemon Crop, but This Time Luck Played on His Side.

"YARDMASTER JONES, I'm thinking," said Yardmaster Carr as the Boomer entered the office and slid into a seat.

Jones grinned sheepishly, but made no reply. Instead, he snapped his fingers at a switchman, and said:

"Hang out the mail pouch, kid; the Fast Mail is due."

"Say!" indignantly demanded the switchman, "where do you get that noise? You're not calling any dogs around here, so don't snap your fingers at me or I'm liable to put a shanty on your eye.

"I don't see any brass collar on you yet, so don't get flip. And you can buy your own makings—Christmas is over at our house."

"Aw, mate," pleaded Jones in a soothing tone, "don't get sore. Gimme a pill to quiet my jumping nerves. I'm all in. Please!"

"That's better," grunted the switchman, slightly mollified. "In the future don't get quite so heavy. But what's the idea of Carr calling you a yardmaster? Are you, were you, or is it a joke?"

Jones held up a restraining hand, while he deftly rolled a pill with the other.

"Boy, I was yardmaster up at Marland the other night, and it was no joke. It was far from being any such animal, believe me! But, at that, I sure had one good time!"

"Well, you certainly do have the luck!" the switchman said enviously. "I've been here for four years, and I've never yet had a chance to display my ability as a yardmaster."

"Luck!" snorted Jones. "There may be such a dame in this old world, but every time I meet up with her she passes me a knockout on the jaw."

"The trouble with you, Jones," said Carr, taking a hand in the conversation, "is that you don't seem to be able to recognize opportunity when she knocks at your door. Your being sent to Marland was your one chance to win a happy home by making good."

"Opportunity, nothing!" boomed Jones. "The only time she ever knocks at my door is when she hangs crape to it. On the level, I'm the one-only-and-original hard-luck guy; all others are mere imitations.

"If I go to a ball game, it rains; and if I bet on the home team, they get beat. If it's a football game it breaks up into a free-for-all fight, and I come back with a black eye and a broken nose, and the landlady swears I've been on a drunk and got into a fight on purpose.

"If I lend a good, straight friend money, he straightway turns crooked, and if I fall in love with a girl, seventeen others likewise go and fall in love with the same dame. The only way I'll ever get to the altar is as best man.

"But I'm not kicking about the love part of the game, I've passed that up for good; what I'm kicking about is that every time they have a lemon to hand somebody they pass it to me.

"Now, take that job at Marland. Of all the rammed-up, jammed up joints I ever saw, that place sure took the cake the night I went down there to take charge. Everything was on the bum. Engines frozen up, yards blocked, and all such stuff as that.

"Well, I may not be such a prize as a yardmaster, but I showed the bunch down

there who was the big boss. But at that I sure had a good time, and I cleaned out the yards and left everything in good shape when I left the next morning.

"Allen complimented me on the good work I did. He said that as a yardmaster I left lots to be desired, but I could certainly get results, and results was what counted.

"To start this hard-luck tale of mine, I don't need to tell you that it was a bad, snowy night with the thermometer at zero to begin with. Well, it was, and then some.

"The first thing I found out when I got there was that the one lone switching-crew had laid off to a man, each and every one was sick and ready for the grave, to hear them tell it.

"But that didn't feeze me, at all. I told the call-boy to call the first four shacks on the extra board; then I called up the round-house foreman and told him to send me a good engine, a good fireman and a good engineer; and I accented the good part of it to him.

"And what did I draw? Oh, boy! What didn't I draw!

"The engine was a leaky old goat which should have been under the protecting care of a nurse, and the hoghead was a newly promoted gink who was apt to have hysterics the first time some snake passed him a highball.

"The fireboy was a student who thought his only job was to just keep shoveling coal in the fire-box, regardless of placing said coal, and who got insulted if you asked him to look out on his side for a signal.

"I've seen some green students in my time, but I unhesitatingly take off my hat to the three ducks who reported for duty as switchmen. They'd had about three weeks' service on through freight, and thought they knew it all.

"But the last guy was the boy! He was about the saltiest boomer I ever expect to see, and I'll bet his railroad record-sheet would look like the bookings of a fly-by-night company playing 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' As soon as I got a glimpse of him I made him chief herder and boss over them.

"I took one long look at this star-eyed bunch of workers and another look at the leaky goat, then I took off my hat, washed my hands of the coming responsibilities, and prayed that Providence would watch over the destinies of all the rest of the poor, unlucky, unfortunate individuals who happen to get anywhere within a given radius of this prize-crew's operations.

"Gentlemen, the prospects were for a frosty night!

"From the despatcher I got a line up of all freights headed my way, as well as time on the varnished wagons. He also informed me he could take two extras east and one west, at once, and told me not to give them over eight hundred tons apiece.

"And my dope showed I had some ten thousand tons of freight in the yards! Not only that, but I was blocked and didn't even have working room.

"I gave the foreman a list of about thirty cars, west bound stuff, and told him to clean out number seven track by shoving part of the west bound stuff in on the stock-track and the rest in on the house-track, and the stuff for the west bound train was to be put on the long track. Then I went to eat, after getting the call-boy started on his way.

"When I came back I found the goat spotted in front of the yard-office. The would-be hoghead was chewing long green and talking wise about piston-rods and cylinder-travels and dry steam, and the fireboy was listening, when he wasn't trying to put out what little fire he had by slugging coal in the firebox.

"'Where's the foreman?' I bawled out.

"'In the yard-office,' said he.

"I went into the yard-office and found the boomer telling three open-mouthed studes how, when he was night yardmaster at Pocatello, Idaho, he put four hundred cars over the hump in one night—a record that hadn't as yet been touched.

"'Never mind your past record,' I said. 'What I want to know is, have you finished the work I laid out for you?'

"'Not yet,' says he. 'We thought we'd thaw out a little before we tackled the job.'

"Right then I climbed that gentleman's frame, and I did it real *pronto*, believe me! I declared, then and there, that I was the

big lone I, and I wanted action. He just looked at me real saucylike and said:

"'Say, cull, don't try any of that rough stuff with me, 'cause it don't go, see? I'm not married to this job, and if you get heavy I'm liable to leave.'

"I just climbed over the counter and shed my coat.

"'You may be a salty old boomer, sport,' I says, 'but you've got nothing on me. If you leave this job to-night, you leave in a pine box without flowers. Put up or shut up.'

"The three students backed up to the door. This boomer looked at me for a moment, then he smiled and said.

"'You're all right, cull. I'm taking orders from now on. Watch us do the biz.'

"He beat it with the students, and I called up the roundhouse to see if the engines were ready.

"'What engines?' said a voice over the phone.

"'Those engines for the extras east and west,' I replied.

"'Don't know anything about them,' said the voice. 'Call again when the boss comes in.'

"'I'm calling now,' I yelled into the phone. 'And you guys get busy and get those pigs out, or I'll come down there and see about it.'

"'Aw, go to grass, you stiff!' he replied, and hung up.

"I didn't hesitate one minute. In less than three minutes I was at the roundhouse. Busting into the office, I found the six main squeezes playing poker with a board on their knees.

"I just made one jump and a kick, and the cards and the matches and the board went sailing toward the ceiling. Then I swung on the engine-herder's left ear and it landed like a pile driver on a pile. On the level, I lifted that gent clear over the desk, and he landed in a heap in the coal-box.

"I was between them and the door, so they couldn't get away, and I yelled in my fightingest voice:

"'I'm the new yardmaster, and Jones is my name, and I'm a real, live boss that doesn't take any sass from anybody. I'm a great believer in action, and, believe me, I'm going to get it to-night or I'm going to fill up the railroad hospital so full that there'll be a S. R. O. sign out in front.

"'Now, I want three engines. And I want them blamed quick, too. Do I get them?'

"Did I get them? You just bet I got them! I also got the foreman down there real *pronto*, and what I didn't tell him wouldn't be forth talking about. From then on I got action whenever I called that roundhouse.

"About midnight we had three extras on their way, which gave us two clear tracks to work back and forth on. Then Handsome Harry blows in with an extra, and allowed that he would tie up for eight hours

"'How long you been on duty?' I asked, and he said eight hours.

"'Well,' I said, 'you're going to be on duty just eight hours more. You get your shacks around here for instructions. You're filling to twelve hundred tons with a helper engine, so get busy. What was the idea in tying up?'

"'Well,' said Handsome, 'the crummy has a couple of flat wheels, and I thought we'd tie up while she went to the rip track.'

"Gentlemen! I blew up with one loud bang.

"'Oh, you thought you would, did you?' I yelled. 'Well, you've got another think coming. I don't care if that crummy of yours had square wheels, and rode like a bucking bronco at a State fair meet; you're not tying up!'

"And he didn't, either. He took his package and went like a good fellow.

"Just then the op said that the despatcher had changed the meeting-point between twenty three and twenty-four, and that they are meeting with U. S. & Co. Not having any switchman handy, I slipped up to head them in the passing track.

"When the rear-end came sailing by me, I heard some one yelling:

"'Any switches to throw? Any switches to throw?'

"I looked up and saw a guy I knew was a stude with his head out and a lantern waving wildly. So I bawled back:

"'Hold on tight and don't fall off, you poor boob!'

"I closed the switch and made for the office. Just as I passed the rear-end of the Pullman—*swish! swoosh! boong!* Eighty pounds of good, hot steam hit me in the region of the waist-band and knocked me into a snow-drift.

"I got snow down my neck and in every pocket, and I sure was cold and chilled, but at that I was the warmest member that student ever ran up against. The student sees. He saw what he had done, and said:

"'I'm sure I beg your pardon, mister; but I always do this whenever I get into a terminal. It helps things along and keeps the train-lines from freezing up. Did it scald you?'

"'Oh, it does, does it?' I said. 'I suppose you want to get rid of all the yard-masters there are, huh? So, you always do it, do you? Well, watch me do something.'

"And I reached for him!

"He jumped back and yelled bloody murder, and began begging like a good plug. I had a change of heart and let him off, but not until I had given him his family-tree from the time his ancestors were fish and baboons, down to the present time and generation.

"When I got to the yard-office, his conductor, Mr. Petty, was registering in. He looked at me and said.

"'Goodness, Mr. Jones, what happened?'

"'Man,' I replied, 'I'm lucky to be alive when they allow such brainless animals as that flagman of yours to ride the varnished wagons. The young jackass turned on the steam-valve and I got hit with eighty pounds of the hottest steam I've ever met up with.

"'I swear I believe he did it on purpose, and if it wasn't that we are so short of men I'd have him over at the undertaker's shop now, being measured for a wooden overcoat.'

"Petty just threw up his hand, and said:

"'Don't, Jones; oh, please don't get me started. I've run out of swear words long ago. If this isn't my last trip, it won't be because of that bonehead's lack of brains and judgment.

"'I think they sprang a test on us at Willard. The brainless one went back to flag, and the last thing I told him was that when they called him in to be sure and leave two guns and a light, a red fusee.

"'When they called him in he throws two guns down between the tracks and comes tearing in. Half-way in, he thinks about the red fusee. So he lights it and brings it in with him.

"'Just picture him; a red fusee in one hand, and two lanterns in the other! Some job of flagging, I don't think!

"'I almost ruined my voice, then and there. I'm not making any boasts, but if that thing can ever be a flagman, then I'm a general manager now. I asked him his former occupation, and he said he used to be a conductor.'

"'Of what?' said I, as Petty acted as if he was going to explode.

"'Of a street car!' Petty howled. 'Yep, he used to be a jitney chaser on the trolleys, and he keeps forgetting where he's at. Twice have we stopped on an emergency bell-cord signal.

"'Once a lady asked him to get her baby a glass of water, which he did, and she gave him a dime. What does that guy do but reach up and pull the signal-cord twice. He forgot where he was, but he wanted to be sure and ring up all the company's money

"'As a result of this bonehead's funny work, the engineer is a screaming bunch of nerves, the fireboy is all hostile, and I'm a nervous wreck.'

"'It sure is funny how much trouble one student can cause,' I said. 'But I am sure surprised at my getting along as well as I have to-night, because I've got three of them on the switch-engine as switchmen, and the hoghead and the fireboy are also studes. But up to now they haven't made a miscue'

"I had no more than got the words out of my mouth when, *bang!* One loud crash, and the sound of yells.

"I almost tore the storm-door off its hinges in getting to the scene of the disaster. Know what that bunch of snakes did? You couldn't guess in a thousand years.

"They'd made a flying switch with a

passenger-coach, and the student who played field bent the wrong rail and put the goat up against No. 23's engine!

"It didn't knock the paint off the passenger-engine, but it knocked the steps off the goat and did considerable damage in the cab, where the fireboy did deadly execution with his fire-shovel before he finally unloaded by way of the gangway.

"When I got on the scene the engineer was talking about side-swiping and not paying any attention to protecting Rule 93, while the fireboy, with his shovel still in his hand, is wanting to know how many were hurt, and the boomer has the three students lined up in a row and was airing his opinions of studes in general and this bunch in particular.

"Well, we got that muss straightened up and No. 23 out of the way. Then came the other passenger-trains. We got rid of them so easily that I was getting some proud of my ability as a yardmaster, when we had another catastrophe.

"No. 1 blew in and unloaded passengers and express and highballed off. The agent pulled the truck to clear and dropped the handle down on the ground and mounted the truck. The first chair-car that comes along has a safety balance-chain dragging, and it hooks in the handle of that express-truck.

"It gave that truck a jerk and knocked the agent over a barrel of cabbage, and he came up with an automobile-tire around his neck for a life-preserver.

"I began passing washouts to the engineer, but he was not looking my way. The porter reaches up and batted the signal-cord twice and they stopped just after the truck has a head-end collision with an electric sign-post.

"The agent and the cabbage and the automobile-tire rolled over into a snow-drift, and the rest of the stuff piled on top of them. The truck was a wreck.

"I washed my hands of that affair and went into the office to see what the new line-up was. It showed five west-bound freights headed my way and three east-bounds. The orders said not to fill exceeding twelve hundred tons—and me with a yard full of tonnage!

"I decided to fill to suit myself, and told the op that if he blew his knowledge before I got those ginks out of town that I'd commit murder

"Wilson was the first guy. He had eleven hundred tons, and I gave him four more. He yelled and beefed, but seeing that it wouldn't get him anywhere, he took it and went.

"Alderson had eight hundred flat. I gave him an extra seven hundred and sent him on his way talking to himself and threatening all kinds of investigations when he got in. The next guy had a deadhead crew and a double-header. The despatcher let me split him and fill him to twelve hundred tons

"And the rest of the bunch got theirs, too, believe me!

"I was just congratulating myself on my smooth work when Allen blew in on No. 998.

"He got on the wire and began chewing on the despatcher and wanted to know what the blankety-blank blank he meant by loading down those red-ball freights that way.

"From what I could gather of the confab, Alderson and Wilson and the rest of the boys were doubling the hills because they had more tonnage than they could wabble.

"It was no place for a student yardmaster, so I immediately had a pressing engagement elsewhere. An hour later, when I returned, Allen was still there, with blood in his eye, and an earnest desire to do biz.

"Without any preliminaries or skirmishing tactics, he opened fire with all his vocal batteries. The first thing he did was to put down a barrage-fire, so I can't retreat, then he opened up with the big guns. I stood it for some ten minutes, then I hoisted the white flag of surrender and passed in my resignation

"That held him for a moment or so, and then we compromised. I asked him if he didn't want results, and he said results were all right, but I was sure putting the road on the blink.

"But by the time the last regular freight had departed I had only six hundred tons of freight in the yards, and it's for the

northwest line. I had two crews laying over and I asked the despatcher to let me run them.

"'O. K.,' says he. 'Run one light and the other not exceeding nine hundred tons.'

"Conductor Hill got the caboose-bounce. When I told him that it was a caboose-bounce he said he bet it was the biggest caboose on the division that he was getting. If I could have juggled the line-up any, I'd have sent him out with the six hundred tons, but I couldn't, so I let him go.

"The call boy blows in just then.

"'Did you call those crews?' I asked him.

"'Sure,' said he. 'And I got them all except one shack who said to tell that four-flushing, uneducated, wopple-jawed son of a student yardmaster, that he wouldn't take anything out until he got good and ready!'

"Then I got hostile! I hiked for this shack's domicil and found him in bed. I took that gent by the nape of the neck and yanked him out of bed with a jerk that must have loosened all his back teeth.

"I gave him a couple of shakes and bawled in my meanest voice:

"'You ham-and-egg eating son of a club-binder! What kind of a message was that you sent me by the call-boy? Answer me real quick or I'll kick the living daylights out of you!

"'I'll walk on your face until your own sweetheart won't be able to recognize you. I'll pulverize you, you dead-heading son of a gun! Speak, you poor fish! Speak!'

"'Partner,' said he in a trembling voice, 'I don't remember saying a word like that. Honest. I might have been talking in my sleep.

"'I do, sometimes. I'm always ready to go—anywhere, any place, any time. What do you want me for?'

"'For an extra,' said I. 'And it's a good thing I'm peaceably inclined, else I'd work on you right here. Now throw your feet out and get dressed in double-quick time.

"'I've herded too many snakes in and around Pocatello to let any would be-smart boomer get heavy with me. I'm the boomingest old boomer you ever met, and, after this, when you speak to me, you take off your hat and say "sir," or I'll jar you loose from your home.

"'And if that engine isn't on that train and ready to go at exactly thirty minutes ahead of leaving time, I'm going to demand an explanation from you.'

"Yep, he was there, Johnny on the spot. When the boss came down next morning we got a message saying I was relieved from further duty at Marland. I came home on No. 35.

"And I passed every gent who left Marland last night with my little packages of wo. They're strung from Batimer to Almo, in every passing track and spur.

"I suppose I've made more enemies than I'll ever be able to live down on this pike. Allen came home with me, and he almost threw a fit when he saw how many trains there were all along the line.

"He says it will cost the road a thousand dollars to move those trains, on account of my bonehead, tonnage-pulling craze. He says they should have been to Cline by now. I wouldn't be surprised if I get fired over this deal."

"Fired nothing!" snorted Carr. "Allen doesn't know where he's at, that's all! You've done this road the best turn of your young life.

"Don't you know that No. 23 jumped the track at the east end of the yards and has had all traffic tied up since two o'clock this A.M.?

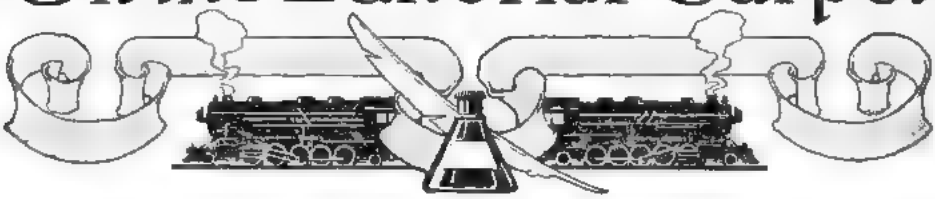
"We just got them moving an hour ago, but we couldn't have handled a thing if all those freights had come bobbing in on us. It would have jimmed the works proper. Those freights are better off out in passing tracks than blocking us on the main line out there."

Jones scratched his head in blank amazement.

"You don't say so!" he exclaimed. "I guess I'm not lucky, huh? But just the same, there won't be no more official jobs for mine.

"I figure they don't do you any favor when they promote you. From now on I'm content to be one of the humble laboring class. After all, they've got the best jobs; only they don't know it!"

On the Editorial Carpet



PEOPLE who make crime a business are at least entitled to the credit for providing the material for some of the world's most interesting literature The effort to secure wealth without toiling for it through weary years, has always been one of the world's greatest games, and notwithstanding the fact that it has so often been demonstrated that "it can't be done," there are still and probably will always be—a few people who think that it can. It is this sort of story that we offer our readers in a new four-part serial:

THE MASTER FRAUD

BY CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS,

Author of "Hurry-Up Bill—Engineer," "Blow for Blow," "Hank Couples 'em Up," "Cheerful Tillie and the Lady Op," "Bob Henry Cooks a Ham," etc.

beginning in our next issue. Mr. Sanders already has given our readers a number of very fine stories, but we have no hesitation in saying that "The Master Fraud" comes very near to being the best thing that he has yet done.

From the very first page to the closing paragraph the suspense is simply terrific. What finally becomes of *Albert Quayle's* four million dollars? Does *Inez* get it—or does *Laura?* And who is *the master hand*, unknown even to his own aids, yet whose hand and brain is evident in all that is done? These are questions that will exercise your brain to the very end of the story.

Four otherwise deadly dull evenings will speed swift-winged away, with "The Master Fraud" in your hand and a jar of good tobacco at your elbow.

STORIES of the great war are numbered in the thousands. It's a topic that has overshadowed everything else for more than four years We haven't "gone in" very heavily for "war stuff"—although we have published some war stories that rank among the best—because, in our opinion, it's a good thing in these busy and anxious days, to get away from the great tragedy for an occasional hour. Railroaders, telegraphers—every one who has directly or indirectly been helping Uncle Sam put the skids under the Hun—need a little relaxation.

But once in a while there comes to us a war story that is so good that we feel that it would be unfair to our readers not to give it to them "The Old White Hen," by F. O Bartlett, is one of these. It might be called "When the Huns Came to America." No, it's not an invasion story. It tells how two German submarine sailors landed at a quiet place on the New England coast—and how their landing helped a woman find the crowning glory of womanhood. In every sense of the word it is "worth while"

WANT to take a little trip across the Pacific to the Philippines? "Won by a Nose and a Whistle," by Samuel W Beach, in our next number, will take you there, and you'll see one of the most exciting horse races imaginable. More, an American locomotive engineer, his charming American wife, and a native tallow-pot have a big part in the victory of the right horse. It's a story that you will like Read it!

SEASONS may come and seasons may go, but "J E M." runs on forever. Next week he will tell about old times on the Atlantic and Pacific.

THE "wild and woolly West" of the brave old pioneer days is gone. But there are still living a few who saw it at its best—and worst.

Among these is *Bill Starmont*, who punched wild cattle, hunted wolves and buffalo, chased outlaws, and "pounded brass" at a lonely railway station where an abandoned box car served as passenger and freight depot and agent's office and residence It was a wild, lonely, and dangerous life, but Bill *Starmont* was never lonely nor afraid. His life was absorbingly interesting, and in the end, not unprofitable. If you are fond of the old West, you will enjoy reading "Bill Starmont, Pioneer Op," coming next week. It reads like the most lurid sort of fiction, but is a narrative of fact.

ALL engineers—at least all the old-timers—believe that their engines are endowed with personality, and that they have vices and virtues; that they love and hate and know the pangs of jealousy, and sometimes take cruel revenge, just as human beings do. All superstition? Maybe it is. Judge for yourself, after you have read "The Romance of the 718," by H. Keith Trask. *Hogger Smith* was her driver, and when he fell in love with a girl, the 718, hitherto the best behaved of engines, became a raging, jealous fury.

A COUPLE of weeks ago we were forced to postpone publishing George Gilbert's fine story, "The Man with the Rabbit's Chin." It will be packed in with the other good things in next week's RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE.

"DER Pretzel of Destiny" is a story about the war without being a war story. It is a bunch of good laughs, done up in a small package for our readers, by Earl Wayland Bowman Two unsophisticated cow-punchers from a big Western ranch are sent by their foremen to Chicago, in charge of a train-load of cattle. After reaching the Windy City they decide to journey on to the East, and see the wonders of New York. In their isolated life on the range they had not heard about the big war. Their first information that a war was going on was received from a friendly brakeman, who told them a wild, weird tale of the pretzel which he said had caused the war. Button your vest tightly before you read this story, to keep from splitting your sides laughing

REMEMBER the first time you were in love? How old was she? Only ten years older than you—not up to the average! The first lady of our editorial heart just about doubled our age—which was fourteen. Don't remember the details very clearly, do you? Too bad, but it can be helped. Will MacMahon will bring it all back to you in his next *Austin Irby* story. And, if you are more interested in dots and dashes than in heart throbs and love's young dream, it will please you just as much, for the lady was an op, too. Read "Puppy Love and Orange Peel," in next week's issue.

HAVE you read "In the Devil's Own Coin" yet? If not, turn right back and go to it. It's a big story of the fighting men on the lines in France, with an unexpected ending, in which the Hun gets all that is coming to him—no, that isn't right—the Hun gets *some* of what is coming to him.

NEXT week we will have another story by Mr Leverage. It, too, is a war story, but a different kind of war; a war of wits, and the battle-field is New York instead of France. "The Green Widow" is the title. We won't spoil it for you by telling you anything more about it. Read it and then tell us what you think of it.

OTHER railroad stories, and a department for the man who wants to know more about the ins and outs of the railroad game. A number bursting with good things, both fiction and fact.

SNATCHED FROM THE MAIL-CRANE.

IF F. H Sidney, of Wakefield, Massachusetts, is going to maintain his enviable prestige and leading position as a teller of tales that are fearfully and wonderfully conceived, he will have to wake up and get ready to go some That one he sprung on us just a short time ago about the civilized and domesticated cockroach that got a regular Broadway jag out of Sidney's ink-well, and then refused to leave till it got a "chaw" of "hillside navy" from the twist in Sidney's pocket, was pretty good—at least, we thought so, but—well, there's a guy out in Spokane, Washington, who solemnly alleges that he once owned a seventeen pound salmon trout that was so tame that it spent its time during the day chasing grasshoppers around its master's back yard, met him at the gate, wagging its tail in welcome, when he came home from his work evenings, and followed him about town like a dog. Probably he would have

had it yet, but the poor thing fell into the creek one day, and was drowned right before his eyes before he could rescue it. It was too sad!

MANY years ago I used to connect regularly, as per the "time schedule," with the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE—in the good old days when "Honk and Horace" made their flying switches on its line. Those were good old times! And but for the changing of the time-card I should have continued a cash patron of the line up to date.

I didn't like to ride in a combination, and listen to a lot of apprentices tell about their woes in shop and forge—in fact, I didn't like the title of the new train, so I made connections on another line. But just the other day I found you had ditched the "mechanics," and were running on the old time-card.

Say, boy, ain't it fine to get aboard the old drag again? Have just been listening in on a few from the caboose end, and, believe me, they sound natural. Just why Mr. Walker and "G. C. S." want to flag the boys in the way they do passes my comprehension. If Mr. Eubanks thinks the old, narrow gage was rough, he ought to take a trip over a certain interurban road that doesn't run more than a thousand miles from Grand Rapids and Muskegon. I rode in the first train that ran from Spokane to Cœur d' Alene over the Inland electric railway in the early dawn of the century, and, believe me, even at that early date, with the track newly laid and *sans* ballast, it had nothing on either Mr. Eubanks's narrow gage or the Michigan Railway.

The toad story by Mr. Wakefield reminds me of an educated fish once owned by a blacksmith in Davenport, Washington. (Any old-time boomer can tell you that Davenport is on the W. C. Railway.) In the pioneer days of the Big Bend country, the life of a blacksmith in a country town was no bed of roses, and Billy Brockman, or Brock, as the boys called him, was no exception to the rule.

Money was few and far between; the farmers would let him have plenty of wheat, on account, and in a pinch he could stand off the storekeeper for groceries and overalls, but meat was nearly as scarce as hens' teeth; so Brock, to help out the larder as well as employ his mind between jobs, used to take his trusty pole and line, and amble down to a pool in the creek, where some of the salmon trout from Spokane River used to fool their time away catching flies.

Jobs were few and trout were plenty, and Brock had a well-defined trail, worn by frequent travel, down to the foot-log across the creek at the head of the pool. Mrs. Brock (and the children) finally became very tired of a fish diet, and she issued an ultimatum that if any more of them came to her shack they would be thrown out of doors!

For a day or so this order kept Brock away from the water, but one day, in an absent-minded mood, he ambled down to the pool, and succeeded in capturing the daddy of all salmon trout (weighed seventeen pounds on its own scales), and, lugging it home, left it on the kitchen table.

Mrs. Brock, returning home from a berry-patch a couple of miles away, made good her word, and when Brock returned from the shop for supper, he found blackberry pie instead of fried trout on the table. After a few (?) words of explanation from his irate spouse he went out into the backyard with a shovel to bury his fishship, but found him gaily chasing grasshoppers around the prairie!

Brock, being a tender-hearted fellow, concluded to let the fish get a good supper, and then he would take him back to the creek instead of burying him. In the morning Brock forgot to take the fish to the creek, and when he returned to his dinner the fish met him at the gate, and wagged his tail for joy!

Well, to make a long story short, Brock kept the fish as a pet and named it "Kaiser." Kize got so tame that he was allowed to follow his master around town like a dog, until one foggy morning Brock was called to his shop in a hurry, and he took a short-cut across the creek on a small log that the boys had peeled the bark off of, and Kize, who was following, slipped off the log into the creek, and drowned before Brock could reach him!

This is a true story, as can easily be proved by writing to the sheriff of Lincoln County at Davenport, and asking why ex-sheriff Brockman was called "Dutch" in the political campaign of 1908. If he refuses to explain, I will tell you where the ex-editor of the *Edwall Press* can be found, who knows why Brock sent him a good legal-tender five-dollar spot for changing his nickname from Brock to Dutch.

C. E. ARMSTRONG.

Once from Spokane; later of Seattle and other places.

"SOAP-WRAPPERS" VERSUS CASH.

NOT only the "oldest inhabitant," but many who are not yet in their dotage, can still recall with painful distinctness the times when "panics" were of frequent recurrence. At these times it was the custom of the banks to suspend the payment of currency, and meet the demand temporarily by issuing clearing-house certificates, which came to be known as "soap-wrappers" in many sections of the South. Mr. A. S. Hale's interesting letter, below, is a vivid reminiscence of the days when panics were in flower.

Your article in the September issue, entitled "On Line with the Paymaster," reminds me of an incident that happened during my experience as paymaster.

During the year 1912 I was paymaster for a small road in the South, during which time a serious shortage of currency occurred, necessitat-

ing the issue by the banks of clearing-house certificates, which were accepted as currency, and called "soap-wrappers" by the general public.

It being the policy of the road to pay in cash, it became necessary to pay the majority in these soap-wrappers.

The morning after pay-day a negro brakeman presented himself at the window, and pulling his pay envelope out of his pocket, extracted the soap-wrappers and inquired:

"Boss, w'at's dis?"

"Money."

"Kin Ah spend it?"

"Certainly."

"Kin Ah buy something to eat with it?"

"Sure."

"Boss, Ah don't want dese here soap-wrappers. Kin you let me have some *good* money?"

"Can't; haven't any."

"Boss, Ah don't like dis here money, and if Ah can't spend it, Ah's coming back here sho'. And dey's one mo' question I wants to ax you. Does dem folks in Washington know anything 'bout dis here stuff?"

"Sure, they know all about it."

"Well, Ah don't see no 'In God We Trust' on it."

A. S. HALE.

Carrollton, Kentucky.

FROM THE SEA-BOTTOM.

WE get letters from readers in every part of the world, and in all sorts of out-of-the-way places. This one is from the bottom of the sea. At least, it is from a man who frequently visits the bottom in the course of his daily grind, and thinks nothing of it. It's the same to him as getting on an elevated train and riding down-town to the office is to us. He's a member of the crew of one of Uncle Sam's big submarines. Used to be a "shack" on the G. T. before he turned Hun-hunter.

I feel that I am still connected with the railroad, although I broke connections with it in 1914. I served my time as a mechanic with the Grand Trunk, and later went to braking.

All your stories are fine, and the serials have me guessing from one month to the next. The boat I am on now—a U. S. submarine—is quite different from a "ho"; she rolls considerably more than a ho, too. One thing I miss is the good fresh air. I will never curse the cinders again as long as there is plenty of the good old air around.

If the subscription price has gone up, let's know and I will remit the difference, as I must have the magazine. Will notify you in any change of address.

Yours truly,

WALTER W. CUMMINGS.

Somewhere at sea.

TELLS US HOW TO RUN A MAGAZINE

I'VE had this on my mind for six months, so I sure have to unload. I will not spout about the number of years I've read your joy-sheet, but I remember "Honk and Horace," so I really feel that I am an old-timer.

Now I want to give you a few pointers about how to run your magazine, as I am well able to do, having driven a coal-wagon for eight years, so you can see I am well versed in the business of running a magazine!

First: Send out a tracer for "Red and Me." Round those hombres up and put them to work, for we, up in this neck o' the woods, want to hear more about "The Little Old Juice-Joint," and we also miss their spicy tales of grabbing the Jack from the hicks, and their experiences with the town chumps.

Then, give us more of those "Tales Told in the Smoker," and see if you can't wake *Boomer Jones* up and start him spreading—ink again. He is sure some spreader; only trouble is to get him to work. I don't like your policy of using so many continued stories, but maybe the rest o' the gang likes 'em, so I s'pose we'll have to let 'em run—at least till you use up all those you have on hand.

I have never railroaded any, but I sure do love to hear an old kettle working on a hill, with a heavy drag behind her, just the same as I like to listen to a gasoline-gusher hitting a three-per-cent grade with her muffler in the shop for repairs.

I enjoyed that article on the M. K. and T., or "Katy," as it is known among rails, for I had just come from McAllister, Oklahoma, which is a Katy town.

Wishing you years of success, I am,

Yours truly,

C. L. FRY.

Sharon, Pennsylvania.

FLASHES FROM OUR READERS.

IT surely is a pleasure to learn that the RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE will be issued weekly instead of monthly, as a month is too long to wait when reading a continued story. I believe it is one of the best magazines out, particularly for railroad employees, as it is full of pep, and contains items which are beneficial to all concerned.

Yours respectfully,

FRED CHRISTENSEN.

1708 Washington Avenue,
Racine, Wisconsin.

AS I'm a constant reader of your RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE, I noticed in your last edition your notice of change to a weekly publication. I am very much in favor of this change on account of following the continued stories. Let's have some more like "The Treasure of the Peak," and "The Emblem on the Whistling Post." But with the serials don't forget to save some space for "Boomer Jones" and "J. E. M."

I liked his article in the August edition entitled "Some Poets of the Morse Shops."

V. S. DE BOLT.

Condit, Ohio.

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